

## TOUR 4: CAMPBELL AVENUE AND SOUTH MILFORD HILL

This loop will be down Campbell Avenue to its conjunction with First Avenue and then up upon Milford Hill to visit a few sites there, before returning to the Green. As with Orange Avenue which you will cross as you set out, Campbell, has long been a very busy thoroughfare, beginning with farm carts, followed by wagons, trolley cars and a great volume of modern day traffic. You will be crossing it twice, so please stay aware.

- *Cross Orange Avenue using the traffic light and crosswalk. Down just a bit is a small church tucked in between modern buildings. Stop here.*
- This modest little chapel, for a long time, Allingtown's only church and congregation, is the **Union Congregational Church**. Though the building does not date to the colonial era, New Haven and then Allingtown's first citizens were firmly of the Congregationalist faith, so, in a way, it is fitting that this be the first and, for a long time, the only institution. The parish was begun in 1890 and the building dates to that time. For several years, services were conducted by Yale Divinity Students and later by a married couple of ordained ministers. As you can see, the building usage remains loyal to its original purpose.
- On both sides of the chapel on Campbell, used to be, small retailers and service providers, an Allingtown specialty, ran their businesses. Two of them were a bit unusual: **Elm City Barrel and Box** and the **Art-Craft Linoleum Shop**, whose product line could be found on many an Allingtown kitchen and pantry floor. Opposite them, on Campbell, just before the point formed by its juncture with the Post Road, was located the **Allingtown school buildings**. The first on this sight was a two-room facility, the last, built

in the 1890's, had four. Less than 15 years later, a surging population required that wooden structure be replaced by an eight room brick edifice, Forest School. The old Campbell school building later served in other capacities, including a post location for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Other concerns have since been at this busy spot, including an **Original Pancake House** outlet that thrived for a while.

- You will shortly be walking further down Campbell Avenue for a stretch. On the way, you may notice a brace of “dead end” side streets branching off to the left. They don't connect with anything because behind them are more wetlands, once more extensive but, still a dominant feature of Allingtown. Campbell Avenue is actually plotted on a narrow shelf of arable land between Milford Hill and a marshland that drained a long covered up stream, Club Creek. Its flow came off Milford Hill, crossed Forest Road, then Orange Avenue near the Green and meandered on, eventually to finding the West River to the southeast. It has been forgotten in modern times. With such an available variety of natural resources at hand at this spot, it should not surprise that at least four Alling households lived along this short course in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thick with forest on the hill, pastures below and sustaining marshes out back; also, thick with Allings.
- *Please now begin walking down Campbell Avenue to the address 1187, on the left.*
- Looking through the trees, you can spot the **John Prete Complex**, a facility with over 100 apartments, reserved for retired couples and individuals. It was built in 1978, a time when many who had arrived in the area as young adults or children, from various places in Europe and elsewhere, were becoming ready for this type of living arrangement. Built on former Alling family land in Allingtown, for the benefit of people who made great

contributions to Allingtown's growth, the complex's hi-rise building stands tall, useful and near-full today.

- The sidewalk path between the Prete stop and the stop has two long standing places of interest. Just feet further from the Prete complex is the former site of **Hamm's Blacksmithing Shop**. Known for, when the business began as one of the finest carriage makers in the area, Hamm's stayed up with the times, later becoming expert providers of iron wrought benches and similar. Being this flexible, Hamm's lasted almost a half century from 1890-1939. Nearby, **Kilroy Motors**, looks the same today as it did 75 years ago. Only the offerings have evolved, moving in succession from big fender times, to the tailfin era, then VW bugs, station wagons, muscle cars, family vans, SUV's, pickups and Crossovers and from stick to auto, white walls to moon caps to wire wheels. It does seem like Kilroy has always been here.
- *Resume your walk down Campbell and stop at the Y intersection with First Avenue.*
- Now that you are finishing up with Allingtown's portion of Campbell Avenue, you have no doubt noticed the University of New Haven's strong presence along your route. All of this growth and change has occurred in the past few decades. Given its dimension and ambition, UNH has received much attention. This tour will bring you up the hill and onto the campus for a better look at Allingtown's 21<sup>st</sup> statement enterprise.
- First Avenue at Campbell is another important part of Allingtown and West Haven history. No formal boundary between the two exists, but it's generally accepted that here is the line of passage. To the left of Campbell, just before the merger, on property now belonging to mass merchants and fast food outlets, was, yet again, Alling land of

fields and woods until the late 1800's, However, there were some others and one of those families made this a well known junction. Where you now stand, the **Weidemann Brewery** was founded by a German American family of the same name. At least one map shows an earlier operation of the same type, but the Weidemann works are documented. In similar fashion to the neighboring blacksmith shop back up the block, the beer brewing works had a good run, from 1884 until 1943, interrupted by Prohibition. After that hiatus, the Weidemann Brewery became the **Wehle Brewery**. Eventually built into a series of buildings, the Wehle operation was not a small one, although it could operate as one. In the 1930's, if you brought a growler bucket and a nickel up to the front of the building, the dock man would dutifully fill your pail for your pleasure at home or on the walk to. The Weidmann/Wehle concern was also a good neighbor. On land it owned out back but wasn't using, Wehle gave the town permission to maintain an athletic area, called **North End Field**. Here, youths from West Haven proper and Allingtown (accessing via Front Street) could battle their fellow townees in games of their choosing. After the brewery closed during World War II, the main building was used for storage, then became one of the first a bargain department stores in the area, **Bell's**. Ever since, the property had been dedicated to similar outlets.

- With the brewery gone, this corner also came to serve other purposes. Two nearly identical places squeezed themselves into small spaces at this intersection. In the triangle where the convenience store sits today, was the older of the two, **Henry's Market**. Like its competitor across First Avenue, Henry's was a tiny building at the back of a pole supported, canvas covered open-air space. Plants, seedlings, fruit, vegetables,

candy, etc. were these stores mainstays. Allingtown's many Catholic's passed by these two temptations at least once a week as they made their way on foot down the long block to St. Paul's Church on First Avenue.

- While here, have a look across Campbell Avenue halfway up the hill and view the handsome building nearest the road running up the hill (Ruden Street.) You will see it again from another angle. It has an interesting history and a useful present.
- *Please cross First Avenue to the near side Campbell Avenue sidewalk.*
- Before crossing Campbell Avenue, you might want to slip down it a few more feet to territory just feet just a nip outside of Allingtown. No one will know. The colonial style **house at 1077 Campbell Avenue** has a small, poignant and, all too common story for the time. From his home here, 20 year old Joseph Basta left to join the Navy just before World War II began. He left from it again after a shore leave, to rejoin his fellow crewmen on the *U.S.S. Swordfish* in the Pacific theatre. This was likely sometime in 1944. On January 12, 1945, the *Swordfish* was reported missing somewhere off the coast of Japan. It was never recovered. All hands lost. Following Navy tradition, Petty Officer, Radioman First Class, Joseph James Basta and his shipmates are regarded today, as remaining "on patrol." This hero, being from just beyond Allingtown, is not on the memorial on the Green, but another close by, down First Avenue.
- *Please carefully cross Campbell Avenue to view the building halfway up the hill. Walk up the stairs to the second landing. Stop there.*
- This is an Allingtown landmark building, **Harugari Hall**. It has served three different missions over its century plus history. The hall was built by a German American singing

and social group in 1912 on land donated by the farmer who owned it. The **Harugari Liedertafel Singing and Social Club**, like the building, survives today. The organization had to let go the building around the end of World War II, when times were a bit rough, perhaps more so for those of German heritage. Just a short time later, the society was able to sell the property to Catholic Church officials who intended to open a high school for young men of their faith. Harugari Hall soon became as **Notre Dame High School**, but the Hall kept its name. Decades later, when the school no longer needed the building that had been come to be used a faculty housing faculty with and a chapel, Harugari was sold again, this time to the expanding **University of New Haven**. Today, the Hall serves as a classroom administration building for the university. It also hosts a restaurant. The two latter institutions Harugari has served, Notre Dame High and the University of New Haven will be the next two visits.

- A small story about this property can be told. Before this once forested hill and even for a considerable time after Harugari had been placed on it, the hill offered a little treat. A small stream, underground to that point appeared hillside to the right and slightly down from the hall. Before and after tap water became available, neighborhood residents would bring pails and buckets, probably not the same ones brought to the brewery, and fill them up with cool drinking water. You could find the spring by looking for the weeping willow trees that grew near it.
- *Please now take the stairs and pass to the right of the hall and follow the path up the hill to the front of the large building at the crest. You may stop if you need a rest or begin strolling slowly past the front of the building.*

- This is **Notre Dame High School of West Haven's** building and campus. As you've just learned, the school was founded in Harugari Hall in the fall of 1946 as a private Catholic secondary school. The Brothers of the Holy Cross, an Order with ties to the Indiana University, staffed the school and lived at Harugari. The original main building on the top of the hill, now at the center of these adjoined and with the statue in front, was completed in 1948, again on land, up until then, farmed and sold to the school for school for one dollar. ND, its usual nickname, has had several physical plant additions in its three quarters of a century, you can see them here, and has upgraded its facilities almost constantly. This highly regarded school has helped over 11,000 young men get a good start on life; 98% of its graduates attend college. Notre Dame has also been a good citizen of Allingtown and West Haven.
- *Please exit Notre Dame's campus via Riccardo Street opposite the far side of the building, then cross Ruden Street, turn right and walk down the sidewalk.*
- This short walk provides a good viewing of the **University of New Haven's** compact campus. Many of the buildings in this quarter are, dormitories. Down a way, on the right across Ruden, is the same building we saw from Campbell Avenue. You were promised more about this handsome and atypical building. Soon, soon.
- *On the left, a large building with the signage **University of New Haven** will appear. Turn left here and enter the campus following the left-hand sidewalk. Pass to the front of the logoed building, the campus library, then turn right at the end of it and walk ahead and enter the quad. Stop in its center.*

- The University of New Haven has had a rather fascinating history, owing, in part, to its fairly unique beginning. The school was formed in 1920 at nearby Yale University by Yale and community officials. Classes, were conducted at odd hours, nights and weekends were put to this purpose. many in the off hours, good for those with daytime jobs. Yale's regular faculty taught many of the courses. The new school was known at first, as the "New Haven YMCA Junior College," the type of school ambitious young people of working class backgrounds could prepare themselves, utilizing the practical curriculum to advance to something new and challenging. Though the original function remains, the University of New Haven has made itself into a great deal more. In less than two decades, beginning in the late 1950's, UNH became a 4-year degree granting institution, moved its campus here to Milford Hill in Allingtown, began building housing for residential students, and, in 1970, became a University. Today this school with its humble beginnings, has nearly 7000 students from all over the world and an 82 acre campus as it expands in all four geographic directions.
- You have no doubt noticed the large, ornamental. Colonial style building to the left rear of the library. This is **Maxcy Hall** which has a complete prior history of its own on Milford Hill. Maxcy was built as the headquarters and centerpiece of the **New Haven County Home for Children**. For several decades in the early to mid-1900's, this institution housed, around 200 at a time, orphaned and neglected children from the county. The land had been bought from a Smith family, who lived down on Campbell Avenue along the path we took at the start of this tour. Maxcy was built around 1910 and added to a few times. It is one of three notable structures on the hill dating to that

period before the First World War. The County Home was generally quite self-reliant, with its own school, gardens, laundry, medical clinic and more. It was home to about 150 children at a time. The County Home for Children closed in 1955. Five years later, the University of New Haven purchased the property atop Allingtown's Milford Hill. Two other original buildings from the Children's Home survive as buildings beside Maxcy are the "**Gate House**" out by the Home's original entrance on the Boston Post Road and the "looks out of place" mansion type building you have observed from two different directions. That one, using its original name, is the **Walter House**. Along with the neighboring Harukari Hall, this building now forms the University's south campus. Both these buildings have served multiple purposes. The Walter House, with its fancy stucco exterior and Tudor gables was built to appear as a residence – which it was, for unwed mothers and other disadvantaged young women. A chapter of the Florence Crittenton Foundation, a national charitable organization, opened it in 1915 but, when the Great Depression hit a decade and half after, it had to close. The Fraternal Order of Elks moved in for a while, but a bad economy forced them out, too. The property then went over to the County Home until it closed. Briefly, a cloistered order of Catholic nuns made a home there and then, in 1960, when the UNH came to Allingtown, it became and remains an asset of the University. The one-time Walter House is certainly Allingtown's most elegant building, it may be its most utilitarian as well.

- *Pass out of the quad now by taking the sidewalk that runs to the right along Maxcy Hall. Once past Maxcy, turn left to walk past this its side. Soon, you will reach a vehicular stop*

*sign. Cross to the far-side sidewalk then turn right, walk a slight bit and arrive at, yep, the Boston Post Road. Stop here on the sidewalk.*

- In just a moment, you will have a choice paths back to the Green, but first, a little bit of information on the hill portion of Allingtown, which, by far, is its largest geographic component and traditionally, a much less dense area and with less commercial presence. A lack of merchant and service outlets is not true of the Post Road itself, where, as is true of the downhill portion, high traffic made for opportunity. In the middle of the last century, while not everything was available wasn't on this stretch of ancient highway, an eclectic mix of attractions were. Horse riding and ice skating ovals reflected earlier times, while an early TV repair shop, and Army-Navy store, and one of the first McDonalds on the east coast answered more modern demands. One unexpected feature, complementing or competing with the Harugari Society was a second singing society, the **Arbeiter Maenner Choir** group, which also had its own building, still standing, now on the UNH campus. The large brick building you see across the Post Road, also now part of UNH, was an **AT & T Company** operations center, built purposely on the hill for the transmission of long distance and overseas telegrams and phone communications earlier days Over the past several decades, interstate highways and mall development have slowed things down a bit on this portion of the road to Orange, Milford, New York City, Washington, D.C. and Key West. The Post Road now has an academic flavor, not something that would have been predictable a century ago. Off the BPR to the west and north, the hilltop homes mostly appear as they have in many suburbs since the end of WWII, with varieties of post-war ranch and split-level homes

quite popular. Here and there, one can find old farmhouses still sheltering families. This quiet, residential part of Allingtown extends north to the Derby Turnpike, more than a mile distant. The University of New Haven has established its athletic complex in this area.

- *From here at an UNH entrance, you may turn to the right and walk east down the hill and back to the Green, remembering to obey crossing signals and use the crosswalks. Think about taking another tour. If you are already certain you wish to do this, you are in luck, as Tour 1, part 2 may be quickly joined. Simply cross the Post Road and walk up Prudden Street just past a parking lot to the small park with a pathway off to the left. Walk down the path and join the tour at the Adjutant Campbell monument. After this visit, you will be returning through a couple of streets with the type of housing you have just heard about. Joining Tour 1, Part 1 will be a longer walk but, not a long one.*
- If you choose to walk down the Post Road to return, you will get a view of the third of the older notable buildings on the campus. The Gate House, once the only structure close to the road, standing as a sentinel for both the County Home and Allingtown proper, remains on duty for the university.
- Thank you for taking the Campbell Avenue and lower Milford Hill loop. An interesting area, do you not agree?