

---

DON RITTNER

---

## From Faith to Arts Letters and Numbers

By [Don Rittner](#) on February 3, 2020 at 12:55 AM

### From Faith to Arts Letters and Numbers

By Don Rittner

When one thinks of Averill Park (formerly Sand Lake) a few things come to mind for locals. One is it was the brief home of a young comedian Jerry Lewis who worked at an ice cream shop on main street for about a year while attending high school.

A second piece of history is that during the 19<sup>th</sup> century James Gill Averill during Memorial Day Parades rode on his horse, "Moscow," a Civil War horse that is now buried with him in the Sand Lake Union Cemetery.



James Gill Averill headstone with his horse buried next to him.



The third historical fact is not so rewarding. Horatio F. Averill, a lawyer and son of the same James Gill Averill, was the person who turned in Charles Nalle, a runaway slave from Virginia, and who was working as a coachman for Uri Gilbert, Mayor of Troy in 1860. After Nalle's famous escape with the help of Harriet Tubman, Averill was *persona non grata* in Troy. He moved to West Virginia after that. Unfortunately Sand Lake was changed to Averill Park in his honor in 1882 because he was instrumental in developing the area.



Horatio F. Averill. From the Internet.

However, for many people living in Averill Park, a more important part of the village's history was Faith Mills located on Burden Lake Road not far from the village center. Textile mills are nothing new for Averill Park. There have been such mills in the area since the days of the American Revolution.

the porch of his home and watch people coming and going at the Knowlson's Beverwyck Hosiery Mill, a mill that was operating at the time across the road. The mill closed in 1896 and he decided to create a new company and took over the mill in 1897 and it was renamed Faith Mills, Inc. Among the incorporators with him was William D. Mahony as secretary and manager who then lived at 169 Second Street in Troy. Robert McCarthy the son of Peter McCarthy was secretary of the corporation and his grandson Peter also began working there. The adjoining McCohnie Mills was also purchased. Mahony was originally from Indiana but his parents moved to Troy when he was eight years old and attended school there eventually going to a textile school to learn the trade.



Knowlson's Beverwyck Hosiery Mill, would become Faith Mills. Photo Town of Sand Lake.

---

The new mill received the unusual name as told by RPI's Dr. Palmer Baker, "It seems that when Mr. Mahony was first asked to become associated with this enterprise, he was reluctant to leave the work in town in which he was then engaged lest this venture out here in the country should be unsuccessful. His wife and friends encouraged him to accept the responsibility. "Have faith, Will," they said. "Have faith." He finally accepted on the basis of faith; faith in the community, faith that there was need for what the institution could produce, faith that it could be made to succeed under the system of free enterprise and the American way of life, an faith in himself and in those who could be associated with him." So the company was named the Faith Mills.



William D. Mahony. Sand Lake Historical Society.

---

The wooden mill building burned in 1907 and the first building of the three that comprise the mills now was built to replace it, a two story main mill building 260 x 60 feet. The lower mill building or second mill was built in 1912 and the office building or building three was built as a recreation hall in 1918.

The mills were originally powered by water and later converted to electricity. When the water level had dropped by more than six feet one spring, the town citizens, more than 300, had presented a petition to allow The Albany Southern Railway to supply electricity for both McLaren Mills at West Sand Lake and the Faith Mills. There was an attempt to get power from the Wynantskill Hydro Electric Company but the motion was defeated. A dam was built in 1923 to generate electricity for the complex and was used until 1956.

During World War I the mills delivered 100,000 winter undershirts at \$1.35 each on August 21 and another 21,000 on the 29<sup>th</sup>. On September 17, another 336 at \$1.25 each was

---

In 1920 the company built the Faith Mills Community Clubhouse. It had social activities for mill workers as well as towns folk. Inside were a movie theater, four bowling lanes and cafeteria and meeting hall with stage. The company also sponsored annual banquets, clam steams and other events for their workers throughout the years,



Faith Mills Community Clubhouse (demolished). Sand Lake Historical Society.

---

In 1934 the mills got a contract to furnish \$50,000 worth of shirts and shorts for the Civilian Conservation Corps. This deal furnished 30,000 pairs, a combination of summer undershirt and cotton and wool mixed drawers at 94 cents a pair, and shipped to San Francisco to be distributed to men in the West Coast camps. They also shipped 30,000 cotton wool mixed undershirts at \$.905 each. In 1938 they scored again and just in time since the mill was closed for a week and half. This time it was also for the CCC.

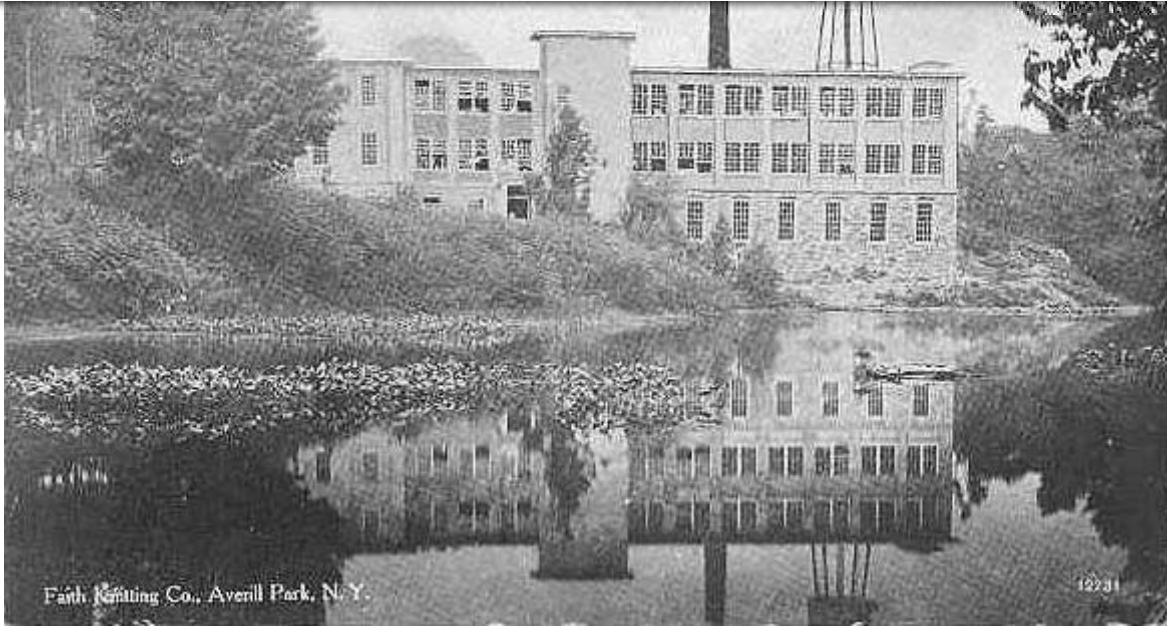




These wool union thermal suits kept many a person warm during the cold months.

In 1940 Faith Mills acquired the Wynantskill Manufacturing Co. on Ford Avenue and the Thermo Mills in West Sand Lake. Mahony was also chairman of the executive committee of the International Talc Co, Inc., of New York. Mahony was president and treasurer of both Faith and the Wynantskill company. Thermo was refitted for making knitted wear.

During the 1940s, residents from Averill Park, Sand Lake, and West Sand Lake made their living working at Faith Mills. At this time 250 to 325 people worked there during the seasons. Considering the total population of these three communities was about 1500, Faith Mills was a major employer. Some 200 people regularly worked here and the remaining people resided within a 20 miles radius of the plant. The combined weekly payroll of the estimated 250-325 workers was between \$5,000-\$6,000 dollars. To put that in perspective, \$1000 of purchasing power in 1940 is worth \$18,372.00 in 2020.



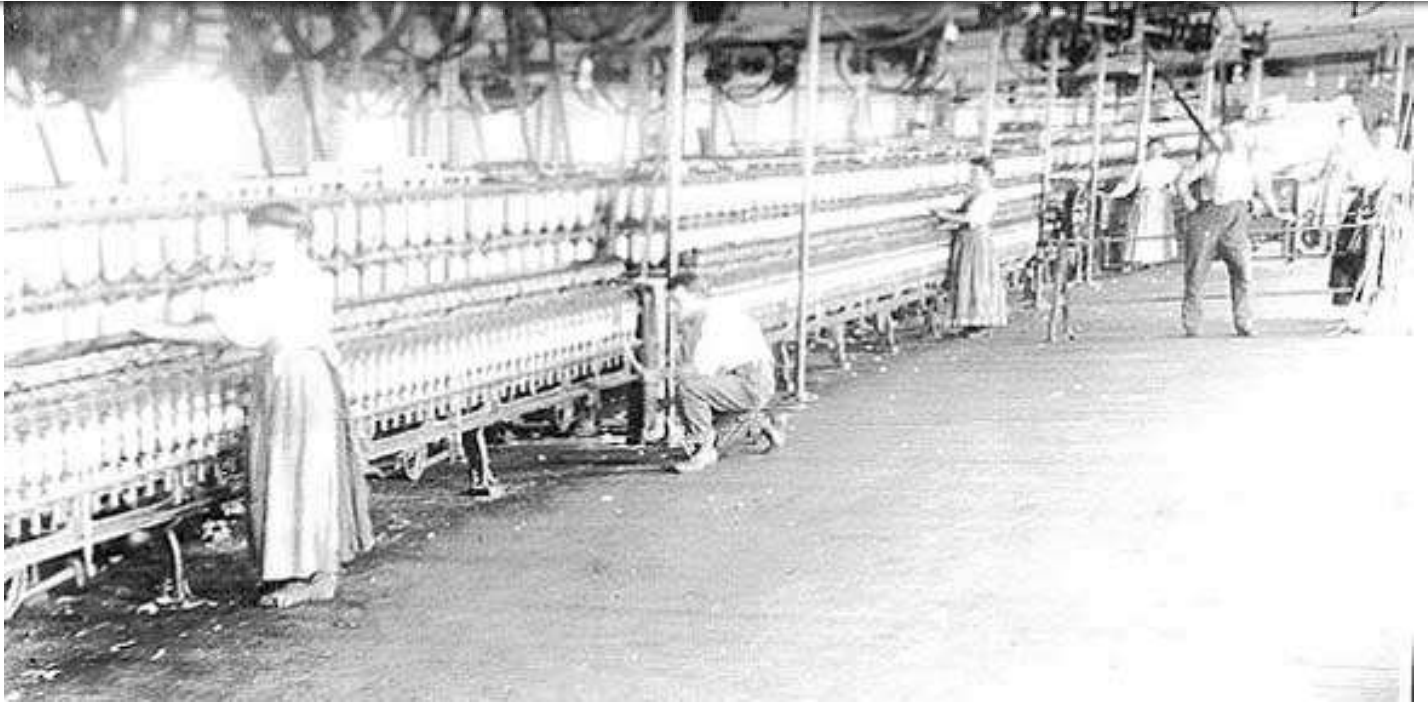
Postcard.

---

This payroll was distributed of course mostly in the local communities for rent or mortgages, food, clothing, etc. During the summer peak hours when the mill was making its winter lines, wives of the regular workers could also work there supplementing the family income. That also went for older children 18 or older who could make some money for school or extra spending money. It was a true family operation.

Faith Mills had an annual Christmas banquet for its workers and in 1945 they invited every serviceman and women to attend who lived in the Town as special guests of honor. About 70 attended the event at the Crooked Lake Hotel.

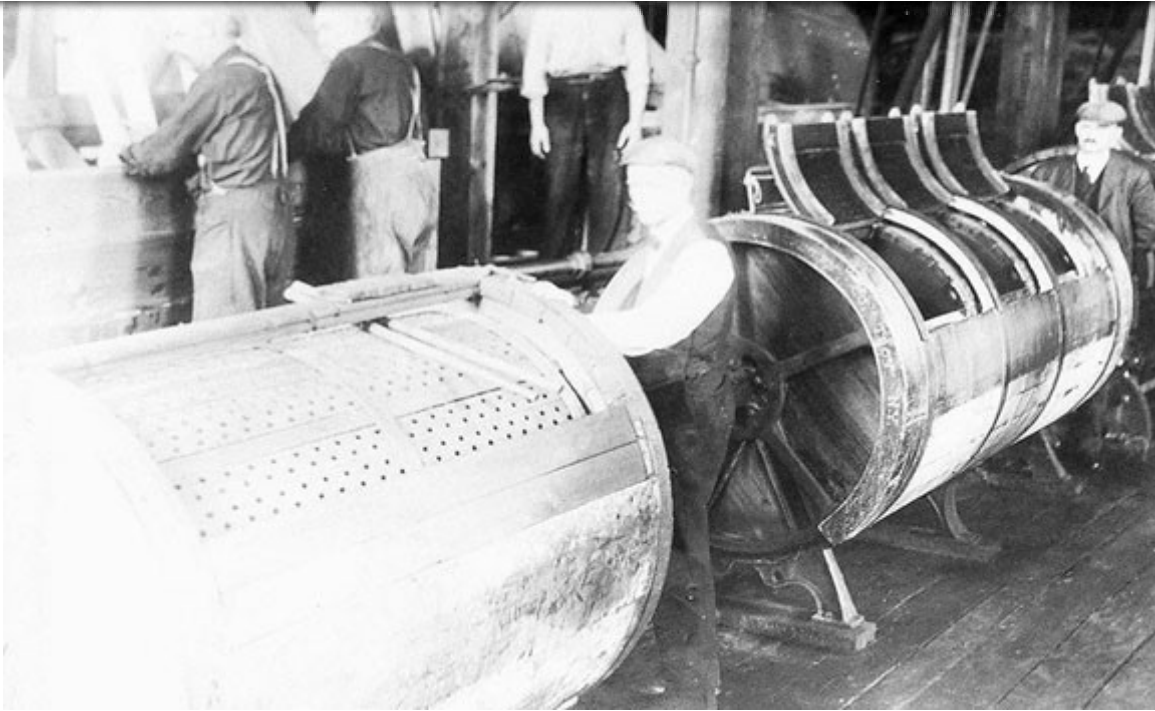




Spinning looms holding bobbin spindles. Sand Lake Historical Society.

---

However, there were problems. During this period of the 1940s the demand for heavy underwear was falling and new lines had to be developed. Faith adapted and started making cloth for men's topcoats and overcoats. Knitted good versus woven coats also became more demanded. The popularity of the knitted overcoats were met by the addition of more knitting equipment at the mills. They made both yarn and cloth as a result. Raw material in the form of foreign and domestic wools, alpaca, camel hair and mohairs arrived in bales and stored until needed. The wool had to be processed first before it could used by first removing the burrs or foreign material and then carded which combed the fibers into parallel positions and then it is spun. Here the wool was drawn out and fibers twisted into long yarn, which made it ready for knitting.



The mills, known as a knitting mill, bought the raw material, knitted the yarn and then made the underwear.

**TEXTILE WORK**

**EXPERIENCE NOT NECESSARY**  
Steady, good pay with overtime. Opportunity for advancement. Board reasonable. Rents low

Apply At Once

**FAITH MILLS, INC.**  
AVERILL PARK, N. Y. OR  
LOWER FORD AVE. TROY

Release Required if Essentially Employed

During World War I and II, the mills was called on to make clothing. They made underwear and knitted overcoats material. When work slowed down the mill made sweaters and other cloths to keep the workers busy. During World War I they made winter underwear for America, Canadian and British troops.



The Sewing room in 1953 now is used by Arts Letters and Numbers.

In August 1940 the Army ordered from Faith, 6,889 pairs of Woolen Drawers at 89.46 cents a piece. In April 1941, \$89,411 for 75,000 undershirts, \$87,413 for 75,000 woolen drawers. In 1941 Faith receive two contracts for \$97,000 for 40,000 pairs of heavy weigh drawers and \$140,200 to supply 40,000 woolen undershirts. In December of that year they received contracts for \$60,200 for 50,000 woolen drawers, and \$128,150 for 100,000 woolen undershirts. They continued during the war to get sizable contracts.



The cutting room in 1954. Sand Lake Historical Society.

---

On April 20, 1942, Mr. and Mrs. James Yokubait and family who ran the Faith Mills Boarding House since 1940 moved to Fort Plain. On November 14, 1942 Mr. And Mrs. Joseph Face took over and moved into the Faith Mills Boarding house, which they then operated.



The Faith Hills Boarding houses now are used by residents of Arts Letters and Numbers.

---

The Face family was not your average family. Prior to taking over the boarding house, Joseph worked for the Shakers at the South Family in Mount Lebanon tending to the cows and horses. Joseph had two sons, Joseph Jr., and the younger Elroy (Roy).

The younger Roy pitched and played shortstop at Averill Park High School and had no intention of playing professional baseball. After Roy finished high school in Averill Park he trained to become a carpenter but then he joined the army toward the end of World War II. By 1948 he was still playing local ball but the rest is history.



Elroy (Roy) Face.

---

According to his Wikipedia entry:

**Elroy Leon Face** (born February 20, 1928) is an American former professional baseball relief pitcher. During a 17-year Major League Baseball (MLB) career, he pitched primarily for the Pittsburgh Pirates. A pioneer of modern relief pitching, he was the archetype of what came to be known as the closer, and the National League's greatest reliever until the late 1960s, setting numerous league records during his career.

Face was the first major leaguer to save 20 games more than once, leading the league three times and finishing second three times; in 1959 he set the still-standing major league record for winning percentage (.947), and single-season wins in relief, with 18 wins against only one loss. He held the NL record for career games pitched (846) from 1967 until 1986, and the league record for career saves (193) from 1962 until 1982; he still holds the NL record for career wins in relief (96), and he held the league mark for career innings pitched in relief (1,211 $\frac{1}{3}$ ) until 1983. On his retirement, he ranked third in major league history in pitching appearances, behind only Hoyt Wilhelm and Cy Young, and second in saves behind Wilhelm. Nicknamed "The Baron", he holds the Pirates franchise records for career games (802) and saves (188).





"The Baron", still holds the Pirates franchise records for career games (802) and saves (188).

---

In June 1944 Faith Mills won its second "E" Award from the government. In June 1943, Faith Mills was notified by the Navy that their blankets had kept alive about 50 half frozen sailors from a wrecked ship who had been exposed without shelter in a blizzard for 30 hours. One officer reported "At least fifty men are alive and fighting today because of the warmth and protection offered by those blankets." At the time Faith was making underwear for army and blankets for the navy, heavy overcoat fabric for lend-lease to Russia's armies, underwear for the Red Cross and lining cloth for service uniforms. They also made unusually heavy underwear for use by the armed forces in Iceland and Greenland. Faith also had a mill in West Sand Lake and both employed about 350 workers.

In December 1943, the Mills received an "E" Army- Navy Production Award. The "E" award was made by the government for companies that made prompt conversion to war work and notable record of production. The ceremonies included Dr. Ray Palmer Baker, dean of RPI, Lt. Col Herman C Kilber, executive officers of the Procurement division at Philadelphia representing the army and Comm. H. B. Southworth, executive officer of the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps at RPI. Faith Mills president William D. Mahony accepted the award and declared that "Fifty-four of our fellow workers are now in the armed services. They will be glad to know that their former co-workers have been awarded this inspiring symbol. Let us consider it a challenge to redouble our efforts to back them up."



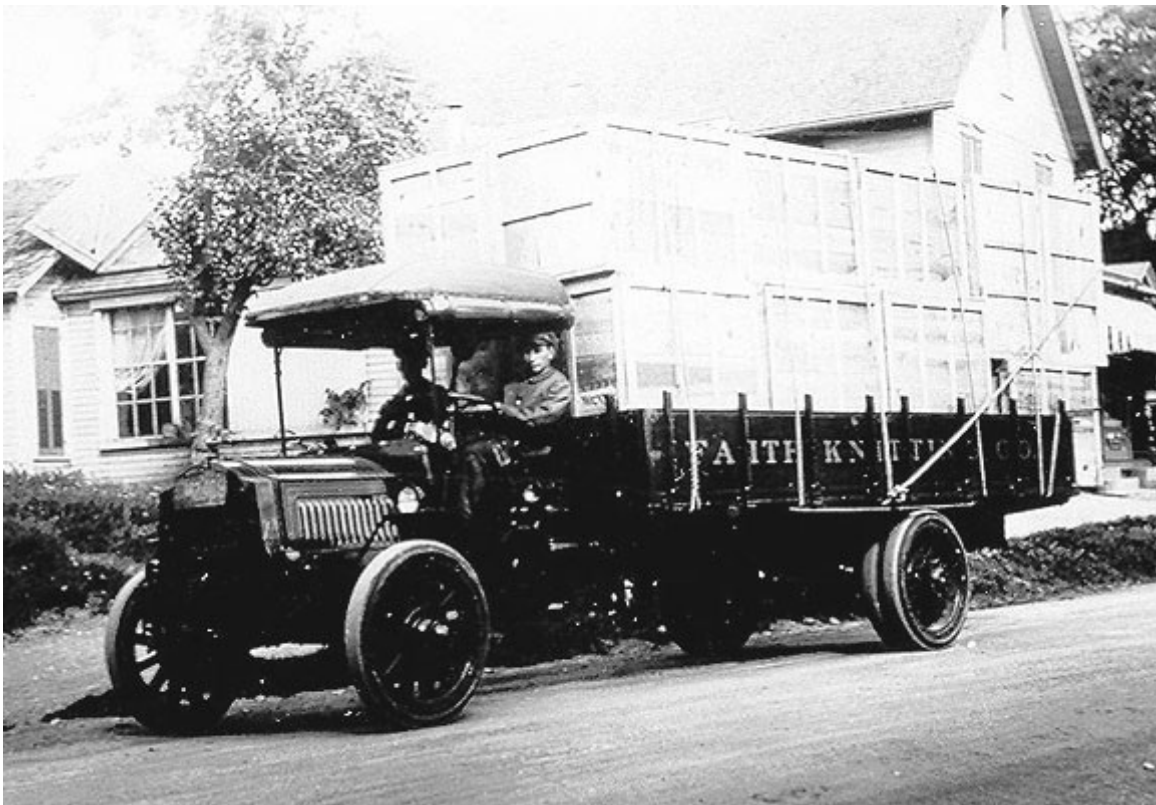
Ad for workers in the 1940s.

In January 1945, the mills received its third "E" Army- Navy Production Award which gave the mills a second white star to their "E" banner that was given to them for high achievement in the production of war materials. The newspaper reported that Robert P. Patterson, Undersecretary of War said, "In maintaining the fine record which first brought you distinction you have set an inspiring example for your fellow American on the production front. This award stands as a symbol of your great and continuing contributions to the cause of freedom." In August 1945 it won its fourth Army-Navy E Award for production. It was one of the first mills to win four awards. Lillian Kelly, Lois Shaw and Edward Bass received an "E" pin since they were not employees at the time of the third award. General Allen R. Kimball who arrived back in the area from his tour in France got a tour of the mills. During the war Faith made about \$10 million dollars worth of overcoats, blankets, underwear and other woolen materials.

Faith Mills was more than just a workplace however. It was integrated into the fabric of Averill Park society. The company sponsored a softball team. In August 1946 the team was leading the Echo League with 7 wins against 1 loss. Their red, white and blue uniforms were paid by William Mahony, manager of the mills. They lost the championship to Stephentown but an All Star squad was put together to play them and it was managed by Joe Warren of Faith Mills. There were five Faith Mills players on the All Star Squad.

By 1950 Faith Mills wanted to unionize and on May 24, 1950 a meeting was called between workers' representation and management. The company requested a National Labor Relations Board election among employees to see if they were to be represented by a union.

Union that 95 % of the workers joined and would not return to work without a contract. The union lasted for a short time. On May 22, the firemen were allowed to back to tend to the boilers while the strike of the other 150 workers continued. The company called for a vote of the employees to see if they wanted a union. Eventually the workers were represented by Local 1122, CIO Textile Workers. They did receive a raise ending the eight-week strike. A new contract in 1955 gave the workers, some 200 of them, another wage increase under a new contract.



Faith Mills Delivery truck. Sand Lake Historical Society.

The company warned the workers that they would shut the mill down if they went on strike. The workers did not believe it. Shortly after the mill was closed and Faith Mills was no more.



Bobbins from Faith Mills were turned into decorative pens and sold on the Internet.

---

On October 19, 1951, William Mahony, long time president of Faith Mills, died at his home after a long illness. In his will, he left money to local institutions such as St Henry's Church, Averill Park Methodist Church, Averill Park Baptist Church and also his general superintendent of the mills, his secretary, and his personal attendant. His personal household furnishings were auctioned off in 1952. He was also involved in local civic and business affairs in Averill Park particularly with the National City Bank as President. He left \$100,000 to create a parochial school for St. Henry's Church that was known as the William D. Mahony Memorial School

In retrospect, it was the beginning of the end for Faith Mills.

A year later, negotiations were underway to sell Faith Mills. Hard times had fallen on the mill. From January to May the mill had no orders and petitioned the federal government for aid in meeting the stiff competition now coming from the South. Southern textile mills continually underbid the northern textile mills. Faith, which had 225 people, was operating at 50% capacity and down to less than 100 employees since January. While civilian orders were fair for the time the military orders were gone.

In February 1952 it was rumored that Faith Mills would be sold to a New York Company. In November of 1952 the carding and spinning mill and premises at West Sand Lake was sold

---

In 1955, the mills were sold to a syndicate headed by First Albany Corp of Albany and Victoria Investment Co Limited of Halifax, Nova Scotia. Most of the stock was sold by the estate of the late William D. Mahony

In 1956 the mill, only the third in the country that made men's woolen underwear, sold for \$77,000. In today's money that is \$721, 826.16. It included all of the property in the Town of Sand Lake and one in Troy called the Wynantskill Manufacturing Company (31 Ford Ave in Troy), to J. T. Flagg Knitting Co. Inc. It was a division of Flagg-Utica Corp, manufacturers of underwear, sweaters, knit sportswear, sleeping garments and swim trunks in Utica. Their operations in Florence and Aniston, Alabama made men's and children's sweatshirts, polo shirts and tee shirts. Jewett T. Flagg of NYC president of Flagg-Utica told the workers that the mill would continue under Faith Mills and the approx. 170 workers would keep their jobs. Arthur M. Butler became general manager of Faith Mills. He had been with Faith for more than 40 years. Much of the stock had been acquired the September before by First Albany Corp, Mahony Estate, the previous president when alive, and Victoria Investment: LTD of Canada. It was sold by First Albany and Victoria.

In 1958 the mills employed 175 locals who manufactured men's underwear both winter and lightweight and the Navy approved "Thermo underwear" similar to the present thermal type underwear we now use. It was considered Averill Park's "big business."

On November 5, 1959, 96-year-old C.A. Smith died. He worked for the mills for 42 years and was the first man to work for the new mill after it was purchased from the former Knowlson Knitting Mills.

In 1960 the mills was awarded military contract to furnish 60,000 cotton wool mens knit undershirts for \$151,851.61

On July 23 1962, the mills reopened after a shutdown of six weeks under a new management that believed "textiles can be manufactured at a profit in the Northeast." George Souhan of Seneca Falls, president of Souhan Textiles Inc. announced that applications were being accepted for more than 150 people to work in the new mill. The plant opened with about 20 employees though 54 were hired. A second and third shift was

that renovations would make the mill "bigger and better than ever." The new mills would make woolen yarns for sale to the knitting and weaving trade. It did not last long and Kenneth Lally of the Lally Knitting Mills bought the mill.

In November 1965 the mills was again sold to William H. Ebel & Son warehouses of corrugated shipping containers that was located at 31 Ford Ave in Troy. The sale included the four buildings on Burden Lake Road and was purchased from Herman E. Orovan of Great Neck, LI. The new purpose of the buildings besides warehousing the corrugated containers was a floor-sweeping compound to be made at the mills. Some 15 Men would be employed at the start. The buildings have about 100,000 square feet of space. The main building had been leased to a knitting firm and the buildings were being renovated to suit the Ebel Firm. The Ford Avenue plant burned to the ground in 1968.

For a great article about work in the mills read Dick Castle's excellent article "My Memories of the Operation of Faith Mills, Averill park, New York" published in Sand Lake Historical Society Newsletter (read it here: <https://sandlakehistory.org/faithmls/index.html> ). Castle worked at the mills as did his father and he takes you through the whole process along with great photos.



By 1966 there was no more Faith Mills. The building at 1548 Burden Lake Road, all 42,291 square feet of it, is now owned by Faith Mills Associates LLC in Stamford, Ct. The second floor is rented by Arts Letters and Numbers Inc. from NYC who also owns 1554-1560 Burden Lake Rd, the former Faith Mill

Boarding Houses, 1525 Burden Lake Road and the lower mill at 1530 Burden Lake Road. The

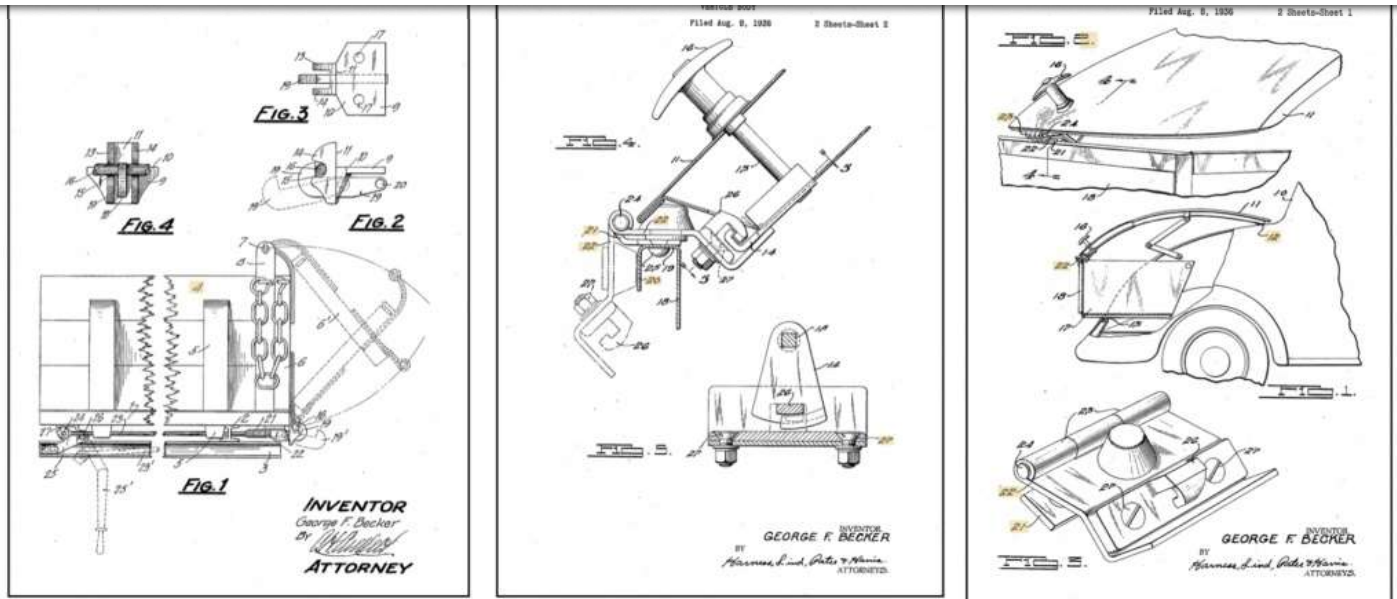




Present Faith Mills building now used by Arts Letters and Numbers on the second floor.

---

Meanwhile, as Faith Mills was making clothes for the military in Averill Park, a few miles east in nearby Albany David Gersten was born and growing up between New Scotland and downtown Broadway. His father, owner of a family truck firm, built heavy-duty trucks on Broadway. Jacob Becker, his great grandfather came to America at age 15 from Germany and worked in a blacksmith shop in Burden Lake, at Hoags Corners, for three years eventually finding his way over to Albany by 1894. By 1905 Jacob was a Pattern and Model Maker at 15-17 Church Street and living at 156 Chestnut Street. By 1915 he was a blacksmith at 49 Quail where he worked and lived. Eventually the family started building wagons and sleighs and then heavy truck fabrication and brakes on Broadway. The Beckers not only built things they invented them as well. George F. Becker invented and patented a tail light latch in 1928, a compartment for storage in cars or trucks (the rear storage trunk) in 1936 and more.



Three patents by George Becker in 1928, 1936 and 1937.

Dave remembers growing up and even working at the shop, J. Becker & Sons on Broadway, which is now housed in the former Albany Trolley Barn. Under the tutorship of a World War II vet and master machinist and mechanic, called "Bear," Dave learned his craft and it left a lasting impression. He remembers the shop having the largest number of hydraulic presses north of New York City and he also remembers exploring and hiding out in the nooks and crannies of the old trolley barn now truck company.

Novelist Bill Kennedy was also a friend of the family and grew up a few feet from the Becker Truck Shop and use to hang out in the shop with his great uncles when David was a teenager. Paul Grandahl, former Times Union features writer and now head of the Writers Institute, edited a book about Kennedy and talks about their hanging out in the old "Limerick" neighborhood and in particular the Becker truck shop. Dave considers what he learned in the old neighborhood a "school." They took care of what they were doing and knew how to do it. With stiff competition from big companies, the Beckers turned to selling truck parts but still operate out of the old trolley barn on Broadway.



David Gersten, William Kennedy and Paul Grandahl.

Dave went to School 19, Hackett Middle School, and Albany High School and took drafting in vocational school. He wanted to move to New York City and found an architectural school there and transferred to Cooper Union. He became a protégé of John Hejduk (1929-2000), the dean of the School of Architecture and famous for his interest in the fundamental issues of shape, organization, representation, and reciprocity. It was the beginning of what Dave feels was a real neighborhood and started teaching there when he graduated. The Cooper Union neighborhood became his life and he has been teaching there since 1991. Later he became associate dean and was acting dean for two years, but went back to being a professor. That experience opened up a philosophy of craft is a culture and he always linked art, music, and philosophy to the roots to the craft he came from.

While at Cooper Union, he was exposed to poets, anthropologists, surgeons, and all kinds of diverse people who either taught there or gave talks. That community taught him what is possible when you bring multiple minds together. That combination of growing up in Albany and the Cooper Union neighborhood gave him the idea of trying to find a way to broaden the diversity of voices in what we think is education and led him believing in community and difference of voice.

He wanted to expand the experiences understood as education by creating new structures and spaces for creative exchange across a wide range of disciplines such as Architecture, Visual Arts, Theater Arts, Film, Music, the Humanities, the Sciences and Social Sciences. As he developed into an internationally recognized artist, architect, writer and educator he knew that he eventually wanted to create a space that would bring all of this together, but not in

---



David Gersten discussing art at Arts Letters and Numbers in 2019. Photo by Don Rittner.

---

which to develop his dream into reality. David purchased a building at 1525 Burden Lake Road in Averill Park, NY, the lower mill of the former Faith Mills. It was boarded up, had no water, and needed a lot of renovation but he was determined to make it work. He put on a new roof, put in a well for water, and began giving workshops with the first drawing some 25 people. That was the beginning and for the next two years he kept inventing new summer workshops as they worked on bringing the mill up to code.



The lower Faith Mills building was the start of Arts Letters and Numbers.

---

In 2015 he acquired the 1859 Greek Revival house (former mill president's home and later nursing home) up from the mill at 1543 Burden Lake Road and directly across from the upper Faith Mills building. This allowed ALN to open its doors as a year round operation. In 2013 he formalized the operation and founded Arts Letters and Numbers, Inc., as a New York based non-profit education organization. He also purchased the two former mill workers houses at 1554-1560 Burden Lake Road to increase the capacity of residents in the program. It has been five years of year round programming which has seen as many as 40 residents representing 23 countries.





In 2015 David acquired the 1859 Greek Revival house (former mill president's home and later nursing home) up from the mill at 1543 Burden Lake Road so that year long activities could occur.

---

David's goal of bringing different voices together has surpassed expectations and he has made it an aim to invite people who share his founding principles to become a fellow of the organization. His personal philosophy of saying yes instead of no allows people to use their creativity to develop and implement their ideas.

After four years of renovating the lower mill it was clear that there were some code issues the Town required that needed to be addressed but were costly so he rented out the second floor of the upper Faith mill.



Present site of Arts Letters and Numbers on the second floor of the upper Faith Mills building on Burden Lake Road in Averill Park.

---

Recently ALN was awarded a NYSCA grant to support the long awaited renovation of the Mill. The grant in the amount of \$145,000 is part of the New York State Regional Economic Development Council's Mid-Size Capital Fund for 2019-2020. The grant will support a crucial step allowing ALN to complete Phase One of the lower mill construction; transforming the first floor of the Mill into a place of Public Assembly. The plans include a full wood and metal shop, and a multi-use public space for theater, music, films, exhibitions and performances.

An introduction to some of ANL's present and past residents.

### **Carolina Munoz Awad**

Carolina Munoz Awad is from Chili and has a Bachelor and Masters in Architecture. She learned about ALN in 2019 when a student she met in Copenhagen during an exchange program in 2016, told her about it. ALN's David Gersten was this student's thesis professor in NYT (RISD). Before coming to ALN, she worked at a studio and a university in Santiago and was a researcher for a professor but was not happy there. While it was in a comfort zone she felt she was not doing anything for herself and decided to come to ALN.



Carolina Munoz Awad. Photo by Don Rittner.

---

For Carolina, she felt it was a perfect fit and a good decision to come to ALN. Her dream was living and working at a lake house and for a community and that fits well with the mission of ALN. While she had no preset idea of what she wanted to do, as opposed to other artists who already knew their art, Carolina had no idea, or materials to bring from Chili, only herself and a passion. David assured her not to worry about it and just do it. Something will come. And it did. She started working in plaster and fabric and worked on process and the role of making and playing with the material.

Throughout high school Carolina wanted to be a doctor but she also had an artistic side and this balance between science and art was a passion all through high school. She did very well as a student and started medical school and after one year realized she hated it since it was artistically frustrating. She was one month from finishing Med school and a switch went on – she was not going to finish it. She decided art school but she was told she could not attend for at least a year so it was suggested she try architecture. Though she never saw herself as an architect, she decided to give it a try and during her second year realized she enjoyed it, after all she could structure environments and make things. Yet, when she

---

Academy of Fine Arts. Last year she came to ALN.



Carolina Munoz Awad working with fabric and plaster paris as a medium. Photo by Don Rittner.

---

She began experimenting with casting plaster and making all kinds of objects with it. She has cast mountains and pyramids by measuring angles and then sewing material together and filling them with plaster. By placing them together they looked like mountain ranges, landscapes, or whatever the imagination fired up. It started as a geometry experiment and found herself sewing patterns in the morning and casting in the afternoon.

When she makes castings she really never knows what the final result will be and that is part of the excitement of the process – unknown colors and textures are often the result. In different light or placement in various locations they often take on different appearances and moods. A casting from the same mould can look or feel different from the previous casting. Carolina is like a chemist reformulating her ideas from fabric to plaster each time.

---

medias. Sometimes when you hear about artistic residency, the first image is just of painters, maybe some sculpture, but mostly common medias. But when I got there and discovered there were also filmmakers, photographer, musicians, writers, painters – architects like me who wanted to do art – it blew my mind.

All together in a one month program, having the opportunity to share common meals, where age, genders, race, profession, media, language, didn't matter. We all were vibrating in the same direction towards freedom of expression and community."

Carolina's residency ended in October and she moved back to Chili but has applied to attend a Masters in Fine Arts program in NYC. In February of this year, she will be back at ALN as part of a team on site from February to May and while here during the first week of February will be part of "Love Burn" in Miami, which is a local version of "Burning Man" as building team with a group of NYC based artists. Burning Man is an annual event in the western United States at Black Rock City, a temporary city erected in the Black Rock Desert of northwest Nevada. It is about 100 miles north-northeast of Reno, and a thriving year-round culture generated by a global community of participants. Love Burn is an annual beachfront camping event developed by Burning Man participants for Burners from around the world and hosted in Miami, Florida

## **Adela Wagner**

Adela moved to New York City from the Czech Republic seven years ago and thought it would be for only a year. Back in the Czech Republic, at the early age of 6, she became a professional singer, opera to be exact, and performed all over Europe. She found herself active all the time and developed a creative rhythm at a young age. She found herself singing first and third parts and studying school work in the middle. While Prague was slow paced living, her opera was in the fast lane, and so NYC seemed liked the place to be.





Adela Wagner discussing (and showing) balance and her studies in art while a resident at ALN in 2019. Photo by Don Rittner.

---

Unfortunately, she had an injury at 17 and was not able to sing again. Her mother was a graphic designer and typographer and her father an artist who builds houses from the ground up, makes puppets and builds computers from parts. Adela unfortunately found herself with nothing to do. Opera and singing were no longer a viable option.

However, art was in the family blood. Her father gave her a camera early on and she started shooting everything and found herself winning second place prize in a photo contest. Coming from a family culturally pessimistic, realistic and strict, there was no sugar coating on her father's feedback on her art. Yet in 2007 she submitted her work to a European international competition on cultural diversity. Anyone under the age of 18 could submit and her entry was titled "Alter Ego." She placed at first prize representing the Czech Republic. She looked at diversity in Czech, and made a point to seek similarities instead of things that divide us. It was obvious that activism and social justice was in the blood. She went to Denmark at age 19 for a ten-day residency lead by professional artists of all mediums from all over Europe. While there she created both music and photography but going forward



---

When she graduated from high school she looked at various Czech university and degree programs and found that art degrees were missing very good teachers and mentors. Schools were turning out cookie cutter students and so Adela decided instead to study international business and diplomacy. She already spoke French, English, Spanish and the Czech language and adored math and science, so why not. She worked at SONY, NIKON and a local ad agency. She combined her studies of international relations and working in the arts. In the Czech Republic, the country was still recovering from communism and most of the photography commissions were outsourced.

She taught photography as an adjunct at the University of Economics in Prague but aware she didn't know everything and wanted to learn more so she moved to New York City. She formed a student based non-profit called "Indivisuals" connecting artists and helping them develop and execute large-scale projects oriented on education or charity work. Adela formed a habit of saving money to cover her expenses but her early start in New York City was rough. Once she saw a chair that reminded her of one from back home, and so she carried it 4 blocks all the way to her apartment. The beginnings were tough, but Adela found a great deal of support and help from a woman named Nicole Haran who not only hosted her for her first Christmas in Brooklyn, supported her art, but also became family to her.

Art collaboration with a new artist friend Mary Prescott, composer and pianist, brought Adela to Arts Letters and Numbers on a 10 day intensive residency, to work on an opera and create visual art. While initially there was some friction in differences of work style, they became long time collaborators and close friends.

Since then, Adela's work has been exhibited around the world. She has a project called "All People Are" focusing on breaking of stereotypes and generalizations that traveled throughout Europe during the refugee crisis. She has been working full time in the city as a photographer, curator and visual activist. She came to ALN in 2019 for a short residency. Most recently, at ALN she worked on a large-scale installation of mass shootings in the United States, which was represented as data visualization. It was an interactive exhibit and a call for action incorporating tactile and auditory experience. In fact, she had to update it during her opening night to depict yet another mass shooting that happened the same day. It is to become a traveling exhibit.

and actively collaborates with FIGMENT Project an arts based non-profit. She is currently working as a human rights advocate, visual activist and is a grant recipient of NERT 2020 Civic Ignition. Her art practice lies at the intersection of many different art forms, from music to photography, film, through installation and immersive art. She creates conceptual projects reacting on sociopolitical realities in hope to activate change, and move from thought and awareness to action.

## Sophia Krupsha

Sophia originally is from Kingston, Pennsylvania, but recently been bouncing between there, State College, Pennsylvania, and Fryeburg, Maine. She was an only child, but grew up with a very close extended family. Her parents worked when she was young, so she was often the village child being passed around to her relatives. However, being in a close family did not mean there wasn't conflict but despite all of the in fighting she has remained fairly close.



Sophia Krupsha discussing her artwork at a public showing at ALN in 2019. Photo by Don Rittner.

~~now valuable family is. She also grew up in the aftermath of the anthracite coal industry.~~  
She is a descendant of coal miners and breaker boys and because of both her family history and education, her work is heavily influenced by the history and residue left behind in this area of the Rust Belt.

While she doesn't remember a lot about her early childhood, she does remember that she was very interested in art from the beginning, specifically drawing and coloring. Her mother probably has bins of her 'masterpieces' from throughout her childhood. She believes that the first time she actually began to seriously work on her artistic skill was about the age of 11. At that time she was very much into the Japanese style of comics known as manga and anime, and she wanted to replicate the style into her own character designs. She consistently drew through high school, and was introduced to painting in her senior year.

While she was originally intending to go to college for immunology, she switched her major last minute to fine art. Through deep reflection and consideration, she decided she would rather be happy by pursuing something she enjoyed instead of wealthy by something she was not entirely confident in at the time. Strangely, her hobby became her career choice and vice versa. She felt that she owed it to her family if not herself to pursue something that her parents worked so hard to give her – the choice to do what she wanted regardless of personal wealth.

She has been painting ever since.

She learned about ANL over this past spring (2019). She felt it necessary to continue her education in an unconventional way over the summer and gave herself some time to focus on her direction since she felt somewhat lost. She decided to mass apply to many residency programs with the expectation that she would likely be rejected due to her inexperience; however, much to her surprise, she heard back from one and it was ALN.

She immediately felt a great sense of relief since it validated to her that this was the correct career path followed by the desire to attend. She could not let an opportunity like that pass, so through some creative thinking, she was able to continue to work and intern AND go to the residency. It never felt like a question to her whether she was attending or not. Her attitude was that she would do whatever it took to go.

terms of her work and her career without it. Through her short time spent there, she participated in events such as T-Time with Rob and Diane, group lectures and critiques, and studio visits. She was also a member of the unofficial swim club, and made many good memories out on the beautiful lakes they all had access to. She feels she met extraordinary people from around the world, and made many invaluable connections. Most importantly though, she accomplished what she set out to do that summer, and that was to find the right road to take to better her work.

Having the opportunity to engage with such a diverse and close-knit group of artists and neighbors alike greatly benefitted how she saw her work and led her to discover the right path to take. She developed much love for the ALN program, and recently came back to exhibit again despite the distance.

## **ALN**

ALN works by charging tuition of sorts. A resident can apply for almost any length of time from one week to months. One applies to the program and with it you get your room and board, and dinner, a common meal, which many find a great communal experience. There are shared rooms and a resident is free to do whatever she/he wants to do. Residents are pretty much responsible for their own stuff and they can help with chores around the house and mill if they like. There is a house meeting every Tuesday at 11AM where residents sit and talk about what they are doing and at dinner you can discuss the day. After dinner there is open Mike where you can sing, show videos, discuss their projects, etc. There is Tea Time (not really tea but it starts with a T) with elders in the Averill Park area which is a way for community folks to get to meet and associate with the residents of ALN, most of which come from other parts of the world. Tuesday is Ping Pong. Everyone brings food, music, local folks help with a "food run," and community involvement is important. Every third Thursday, artists from around the community are invited to show or perform their art at the upper mill. The public is welcome. I had the privilege of showing some of my own art during this time.

My friend Gina Verrelli found ALN while we were location scouting for my feature film, Karen or Bust. During our explorations we found another art colony in Salem and used part of it in some scenes in the movie. When Gina found ALN they had just begun to create a monthly (third Thursday of each month) art night that allowed any artist, not just residents at ALN, to showcase their art and network with fellow artists.

further. The next time we revisited in August of 2019 I made friends with a former resident there, Ursula Bustillos Daza, an architect from Bolivia. Ursula is a founding member of the NGO Portal Urbano that is a sustainability think tank and represents Bolivia at the United Nations in the city. We quickly became friends and I discussed an environmental project that I had in the back of my mind and she was working on the annual International Day of Peace and Ecology and decided to try and do the project as an exhibit during that day at the UN. While we only had a few weeks we accomplished the task and had a successful exhibit on September 5, and later I was able to exhibit at ALN. This is the kind of positive force ALN has become. If it was not for ALN and their monthly open exhibits I would never have met Ursula and would never have created the exhibit, especially in such a short time and in a uniquely important location as the UN.

ALN' s mission is to bring diverse people together and form a collective voice and community. Our exhibit is proof of that vision's success.



version.

---

## Getting this Treasure is impossible! Prove us wrong

Hero Wars | Sponsored

## These Cars Are So Loaded It's Hard to Believe They're So Cheap

Luxury SUVs | Search Ads | Sponsored

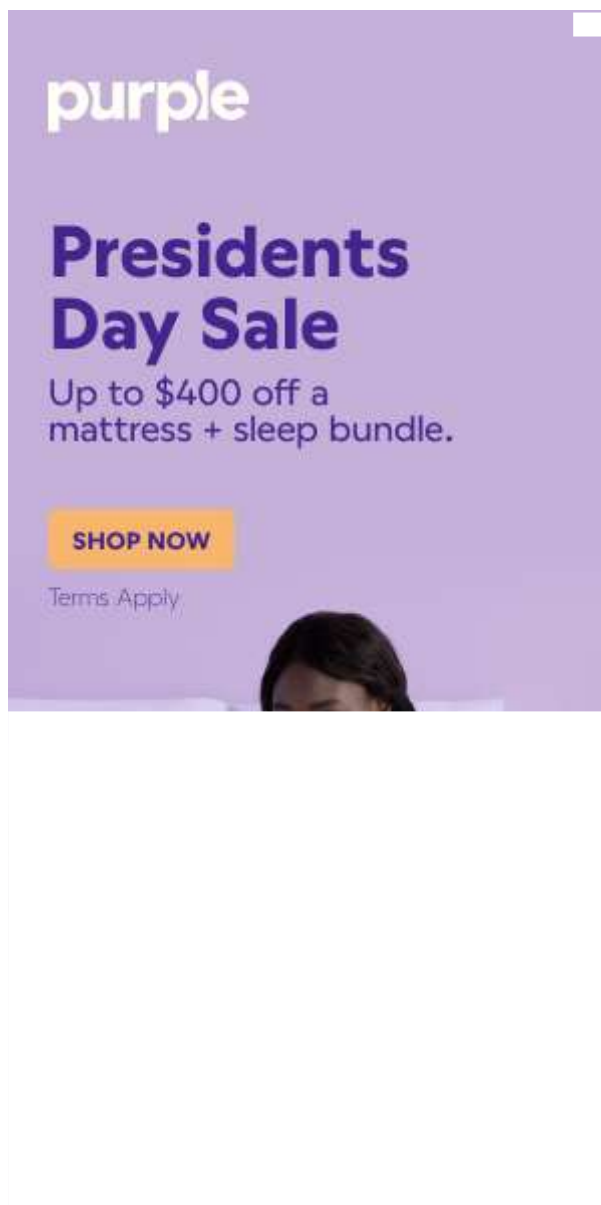
## If You Need to Kill Time on Your Computer, this City-Building Game is a Must-Have. No Install.

Forge of Empires - Free Online Game | Sponsored





members.

A promotional banner for Purple's Presidents Day Sale. The background is a solid light purple. In the top left corner, the word "purple" is written in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. Below it, the words "Presidents Day Sale" are written in a large, bold, dark purple font. Underneath that, the text "Up to \$400 off a mattress + sleep bundle." is written in a smaller, dark purple font. A bright orange rectangular button with the words "SHOP NOW" in white, uppercase, sans-serif font is positioned below the text. At the bottom left of the button, the words "Terms Apply" are written in a very small, light purple font. The bottom right portion of the banner features a photograph of a person with dark hair, whose face is partially obscured by the bottom edge of the banner.

**purple**

**Presidents  
Day Sale**

Up to \$400 off a  
mattress + sleep bundle.

**SHOP NOW**

Terms Apply

## Don Rittner Search

Keyword search across all the entries in this blog.

GO

# Presidents Day Sale

Up to \$400 off a mattress + sleep bundle.

SHOP NOW

Terms Apply



## FROM THE WEB

Sponsored Links

**Getting this Treasure is impossible! Prove us wrong**

Hero Wars

**These Cars Are So Loaded It's Hard to Believe They're So Cheap**

Luxury SUVs | Search Ads

**If You Need to Kill Time on Your Computer, this City-Building Game is a Must-Have. No**

---

**Here's why experts are losing faith in cloth masks**

**Americans In New York With Credit Card Debt Could Be In For A Big Surprise**

Weekly Financial Solutions

**After Céline Dion's Major Weight Loss, She Confirms What We Suspected All Along**

Total Past

**Play This Game For 5 Minutes And See Why Everyone Is Thrilled**

Total Battle: Tactical War Game

**Build Your Magnificent City in This Strategy Game. No Install**

Total Battle - Tactical Game Online

by Taboola

---

## Recent Comments

**Don Rittner** on **The Schuyler Family, Part Two**

---

Jeffrey on **The Schuyler Family, Part Two**

---

**Don Rittner** on **The Schuyler Family, Part Two**

---

Albert J on **The Schuyler Family, Part Two**

---

us51 on **On the Issue of Slavery in New York State**


---

**purple**

**Proudly Made  
in the USA**

as low as 0% APR Financing

**Shop Now**



[Return to Top](#)

---

**About Us** | [Advertising](#) | [Interest Based Ads](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [Your California Privacy Rights](#) | [Contact Us](#)  
[Our Company](#) | [Jobs at the TU](#)

**Content** | [Blogs](#) | [Weather](#) | [School Closings](#) | [Events Calendar](#) | [Weddings/Celebrations](#) | [Births](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Online Store](#)  
| [Puzzles Palace](#) | [Savings Source](#)

**Connect** | [Android App](#) | [iOS App](#) | [Newsletters](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Pinterest](#) | [Instagram](#)  
|

