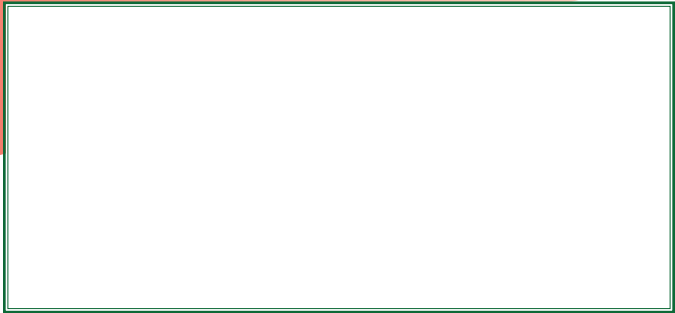


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The History of Nardelli's

by Antionette Desomma Sills

Many changes have made people forget the South Main Street of years ago and the businesses that existed there. It is hard to remember just what Pepes, Ortones, Orchid Florist, Nardelli's, and many others looked like. We want to help you remember a little bit about Nardelli's Grocery Store and the grinders that they made famous.

In 1914, three brothers left a small town in Italy in search of a better life in America. Like many other immigrants, they were young, ambitious, and frightened; but learned very quickly to survive.

Joseph, the oldest, worked in a sweatshop to support his brothers, Anthony and Fred. Soon, all three were working. They worked long hours and pooled whatever money they had to send back home to help their parents. Poor working conditions caused Joe to lose his finger in the shop, and he swore he would take his brothers and find new work. Soon, they were working in what eventually became Nardelli's Grocery Store on South Main.

In 1920, the store was put up for sale. Joe was interested in purchasing it and worked out a deal with the owners. The price agreed upon was \$22,000. In 1920 that was high for a building. Purchasing the building meant working long hours to pay the mortgage. The brothers prided themselves on the quality of their fruits and vegetables, which they bought in New York. While in NY one day, they noticed that grinders were quite popular there. They decided to start selling them out of their store to see how they would do.

They were amazed at how well they sold and soon people were coming from all over to get a grinder. Some days, a line would wind its way down South Main Street. Mrs. Carmella Nardelli said that prices were nowhere near what they are now as a combination grinder made from 1/4 loaf of bread cost 10 cents while a 1/2 loaf cost 15 cents and a whole loaf cost 30 cents. Though they had other specialities such as fruit baskets, penny candy, ice cream sundaes, and more, they soon became known as the grinder kings of Waterbury. Their reign ended in 1963 when Fred, the youngest and last survivor of the brothers, passed away. A nephew, Joe, soon took over the business and remained there until the building was demolished in 1978.

The nephew, Joseph Nardelli, arrived from Italy in 1955 just after the flood, and worked for his uncles until 1963 when he purchased and continued to manage the original South Main Street location until it's demolition in 1978. Joseph, with his wife Rina, continued the business with various locations in the Greater Waterbury area until settling in Naugatuck in the late 70's.

Joseph and Rina Nardelli, along with their children, continued to prosper until Joseph's sudden death in 1989. Rina and her children continued to run the business until 1998. Rina now oversees all locations, while the third generation takes Nardelli's into the new millennium with two exceptions...the grinders are no longer 30 cents, and there are now many locations throughout CT.

Dedicated in memory of - Joseph A. Nardelli (1939 - 1989)
and Frederick A. Nardelli (1968 - 1998).



Daily Menu

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