

Activists And Organizers Of Connecticut Textile Unions

By Jamie Eves • June 11, 2022

Workers in Connecticut's textile factories organized labor unions to gain better wages, improved working conditions, and greater respect. Follow the links below to read stories about some of the organizers and activists of Connecticut's textile labor unions.

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Amy Hooker: Dressing Down American Thread. In 1925 Amy Hooker was 38, single, and the President of the Willimantic Textile Union Council, an affiliate of the United Textile Workers of America, a former craft union that had recently become an industrial union. She was about to lead one of the bitterest, most divisive strikes in Connecticut history, and in the process stand up to one of the state's most powerful corporations. This is her story.

Betty Tianti: "The Company Knew They Could Not Refuse Me."

Betty Tianti was born in 1929. She grew up in Plainfield. In 1955 she took a job at American Thread in Willimantic to support herself and her young daughter. She became shop steward, then president of her local branch of the Textile Workers Union of America. She left Willimantic in 1962 to work as an organizer for the national union, traveling throughout the country, especially through the South, where most of the textile mills were then located. She returned to Connecticut in 1970 to head up the state union's Committee on Political Education. In 1985 she became director of the Connecticut AFL-CIO. In 1988 Gov. William O'Neill named her state commissioner on labor. Suffering from acute emphysema, she stepped down in 1990. Tianti died in 1994. She was the first woman to head a state AFL-CIO, and Connecticut's first female labor commissioner.