

# Stella's Charles-Ten Restaurant of Windsor Locks

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The Charles-Ten Restaurant is:

- the oldest restaurant in Windsor Locks
- a family owned and run restaurant
- the place where everyone knows your name
- host to fourth generation patrons.
- a restaurant that asks you to eat before you come; the wait for food can be long.
- a Polish restaurant that serves great Italian food and is fun on St. Patrick's day.
- a restaurant/bar with a fiercely loyal clientele
- A WINDSOR LOCKS INSTITUTION.

The Charles-Ten Restaurant was founded in 1942, and as of this writing in March 2016, is sadly, but understandably for sale.



This article presents the intriguing history of Charles-Ten using:

- photographs of the Charles-Ten, which regulars call “Stella’s Charles-Ten”, or “Stella’s”.
- a 1992 Windsor Locks Journal article by Jack Redmond, about the Charles-Ten, and clippings from various newspapers.

This is the history of the entrepreneurship, hard work and tenacity of Charles and Stella Tenerowicz, their daughter, Ann, and their long-time bartender, Brian Rocheleau.

## The Charles-Ten Restaurant opens in 1942

Here is the advertisement in the Springfield Republican newspaper on Friday, March 31, 1942 that announced the opening of the Charles-Ten Restaurant. Below that is a poster announcing the opening of the restaurant.



Springfield Republican, Friday, May 31, 1942



For those who know the Charles-Ten as a Polish restaurant, it is interesting that both of these initial advertisements focus on seafood, chicken and steak dinners. Nothing succeeds without an initial plan followed by modifications to suit the reality of the day. The restaurant evolved to a focus on Polish and Italian cuisine.

## Jack Redmond's 1992 History of the Charles-Ten Restaurant

In the April 24, 1992 issue of the Windsor Locks Journal, Jack Redmond wrote an excellent column about the history of the Charles-Ten Restaurant. It was based on extensive interviews with Ann Tenerowicz, who was the owner and manager of the restaurant at the time. That article is in a frame on a wall at the restaurant. It is not on the internet, as are most of Jack Redmond's columns, so the article gets very little notice any more. Since that column is not available anywhere on the internet, I have inserted it below, so that it can get the dissemination and the attention that it deserves. It starts below the row of asterisks and ends at the second row of asterisks. It included everything on pages 4, 5 and 6 of this paper.

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Cabbages and Kings, Jack Redmond, The Windsor Locks Journal, page 12,  
April 24, 1992

## **Where Everybody Knows Your Name**

In 1942, it was Charles and Stella Tenerowicz's restaurant. In 1970, with the death of Charles, it became Stella's.

In 1983, their daughter, Ann, took over the popular "Charles-Ten" restaurant on South Main Street, and it continues today, as one of the town's landmarks and "where everyone knows your name," in the tradition of Charles and Stella Tenerowicz.

This month marks the 50th anniversary of "Charles-Ten" the restaurant built by "family and friends" with hard work and dedication, according to Ann, a local girl, who now operates the eatery and bar, and was gracious to share with us, the history of this family business.

Ann wanted the restaurant to be the focal point of the story, and it certainly deserves the recognition after the faithful years by Charles and Stella, but we should list a few informational notes on Ann, who runs the business, Sunday to Fridays, four to eleven, with Polish food and good cheer its specialty.

Ann attended St. Mary's school and graduated from a local high school, going to Chandler Junior College in Boston.

She stayed on in Boston, taking on a secretary position for seven years.

When her father passed away, her mother wanted Ann to help out with the restaurant just for a year, she said. However, Ann has stayed on the past two decades.

When her mother became ill, Ann took over the operation in 1983, and today is cook and manager.

### **A Loyal Bartender**

Ann has had the same bartender for the past twelve years, Brian Rocheleau, with Ann saying, "You can set your watch by him," adding "you could also call this restaurant "Brian's Place."

Ann does the cooking. Brian tends the bar, in what Ann calls, "a very unique place." As for steady customers, 90 percent are regulars, and in some cases, the fourth generation have been coming to Charles-Ten over the years. She admits, I may work an 80-hour week, and if (I have) and free time... I enjoy the movies, live theater and a diner."

Before dealing Ann's descriptive and meaningful history and recollections of the past and present of her restaurant, a few personal observations of this landmark.

The bar: comfortable and sociable with its framed sayings, pennants, and her father's war memorabilia and numerous pictures, the small, but very attractive dining room, with polished oak chairs and tables, two booths, old dresser, pictures and newspaper items on the wall, a letter from Ella Grasso and in a corner of the room, a spiral staircase up to Ann's office.

Noticed an item on the wall that contained an original menu of 1942, with the following prices: Shrimp Cocktail 30 cents, spaghetti and meatballs, 50 cents, Hamburgers 15 cents; Steak Diner for \$1.50 and Beer 10 cents.

Also caught this on the bar wall, "What you see here, What you hear here, When you leave here, let it stay here."

## **A Look Back**

But what we saw there, listened to, we could not leave there, and with Ann's blessings, the following are excerpts from her own story of 50 years of Stella's Charles-Ten.

In the 1930s, Charles Tenerowicz started the "Subway" bar in his father's South Street apartment cellar. The clientele grew rapidly, and in 1942, the family and friends built the "Charles-Ten Restaurant."

The building is constructed of three layers of brick, fire-stops 1 1/2 feet apart, steel frame and cellar beams from "Old Hull's Brewery." The family lived in the small apartment above the restaurant.

When the restaurant first opened, it employed two chefs, seven waitresses, with live music for entertainment and the legal drinking age was 21.

At the time, there were few restaurants in Windsor Locks, and the Charles-Ten customers waited in lines extending as far as Dexter Road. As the town grew and more competitive restaurants opened, the Charles-Ten slowly became a "man's" bar.

Ann's father enjoyed television, sports, off color joking, dice, black jack and drinking to the health of his cronies - "NAZDROWIE".

He worked 16 hour days, 7 days a week. He never took a vacation except for one week each summer which he spent at the beach in New London with his family.

The only time he could not be found at the Charles-Ten was when Uncle Sam called for World War Two, and was part of the Normandy invasion. He returned from the war in 1947, with two Purple Hearts and various military decorations.

Bullet wounds to one arm left it without feeling and wounds to his leg left him weak, but he continued his lifestyle right up to his death from cancer in 1970.

## **Business and Marriage Partners**

Ann's mother, was not only Charles' marriage partner, but his business partner as well. She too worked in the restaurant, at first as a waitress and in later years as a cook.

When Ann inherited ownership of the Charles-Ten in 1983, she knew many changes had to be made in order to compete with the large volume of local restaurants.

Her decision was to close for the not so profitable lunch hours, due to antiquated kitchen equipment and limited staff, and spend that time completely renovating each room from top to the bottom, of the entire building.

No major renovation had been done since 1942. She said, "Like my parents I was extremely fortunate to have the dedicated work force of my relatives and close friends to accomplish this task."

"In order not to incur large financial debt in these times of economic uncertainty, I chose the "pay-as-you-go" method. The road has been much longer than expected, but I

look back with a great deal of pride in all that my family and I have accomplished with our own hands. They say the 'ole neighborhood tavern" is a dying breed of Americana. "Well, they cant prove it by Stella's Charles-Ten Restaurant"

When it came to management style, Ann had this to say about herself, "I'm a combination of both my parents, inherited my father's dry wit, patriotism and dedication to work, and my mother's strict adherence to the laws, good clean family atmosphere and the "the customer isn't always right" attitude.

### **One Great Lesson**

"Unlike my parents, I have learned one great lesson. No business is worth precious family time or personal health. The clientele will always be here, as we can now boast fourth generation customers. So my own retirement is planned far earlier than my parents, while I still have my own good health and to enjoy life's pleasures."

Ann said this year will be completed with a new modernized kitchen, full staff and expanded business hours.

In retrospect, Ann said, "Finally in 1992 will bring Stella's Charles-Ten to full circle once again. How appropriate, the family's 50th year of business."

The Tenerowicz family has made their restaurant a town landmark, and have earned a special place in the history of Windsor Locks."



**Ann Tenerowicz and Brian Rocheleau**

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Now that Jack Redmond's column is concluded, we are back in the current article. Everything on pages 4, 5 and 6, including the photo of Ann Tenerowicz and Brian Rocheleau constituted Jack's column in the April 24, 1992 Windsor Locks Journal.

Jack's column was written when Ann Tenerowicz was the owner/operator of the Charles-Ten. As I am writing this article in March of 2016, Ann is still the operator/owner. Ann took over in 1983, so as of 2016, she has been doing it for about 33 years. Her parents had it from 1942 to 1983, which was 41 years. Ann has had it almost as long as both of her parents did. Back in 1988, when Jack wrote the column, Ann said that she wanted to be able to retire "while I still have my own good health and to enjoy life's pleasures". So to see that the restaurant is now for sale, fits in with what Ann said back in 1988. Everyone wishes her the best. Everyone wishes Brian, the restaurant's long-time bartender, the best.

Here are two newspaper clippings about the Charles-Ten restaurants in its earlier years. The first is an ad for a cook that appeared in the June 16, 1946 edition of the Springfield Republican. The second is an article in October 8, 1953 edition of the Springfield Union about a fire at the restaurant.

**CHIEF FOR NIGHT work. Good pay. Pleasant surroundings. Steady position. On main highway. Charles-Ten Restaurant, Windsor Locks 749.**

Springfield Republican, June 16, 1946

## **Restaurant Fire Quickly Checked**


Windsor Locks, Conn., Oct. 7--  
A serious fire at the Charles-Ten Restaurant on South Main St., was averted at 11.30 this morning by quick response and effective work of the Fire Department.

In answer to an alarm from Box 6, firemen found the building filled with smoke. Investigation revealed that the fire was caused by blazing grease in the kitchen, but this was quickly extinguished before any fire damage was caused the building. The only damage was to the broiler equipment, and slight smoke damage to the furnishings.

Here is a Feb. 12, 1944 announcement of the restaurant's new Italian chef.

**HERB MILLER Proudly Presents**  
**THOMAS SALVATORE**  
former head Chef for fifteen years at Ferdinand's  
Italian-American Restaurant in Brooklyn, N. Y.  
Now in the same position at the  
**CHARLES-TEN Restaurant**


Meet  
Our  
Chef



Open until  
1 A. M.  
Sundays  
until  
9 P. M.

Mr. Salvatore invites you to try his Brozzoltti Lasagne and Veal Scallopinni  
We guarantee it's the tastiest Italian dish you ever ate.  
Spaghetti At All Hours, With Clam Sauce, Mushroom Sauce, Marianna Sauce, Meat or Tomato Sauce  
Fried Chicken or Chicken Caciattora All Kinds of Sea Food  
And For A Real Treat Try--Lobster a la Frod-de-ava--EVERY FRIDAY  
We can give quick service for the Business Man or hurry snack with our Noon-day Specials for those who want the best, in  
Pleasant Surroundings. Make it a steady habit at Herb Miller's Charles-Ten Restaurant.  
As Duffy says "Where The Elite Meet To Eat"

We Welcome  
The Public  
To Inspect  
Our Kitchen



Dine In  
A Truly Home  
Atmosphere

**CHARLES-TEN RESTAURANT**  
Main and South Streets  
12-7-1844 Windsor Locks

Below is a portrait of Charles and Stella. Beside it is a photo of Charles' war mementos, including his Purple Hearts and the bullet that was taken from his arm. Charles was a true World War II hero.



Stella and Charles Tenerowitz



## Photographs of the Charles-Ten Restaurant

We saw the facade of the restaurant in the photo on the first page. Now let's turn to the interior of the building, where the action takes place. Words can describe a place, but only photos can bring it to life. As mentioned above, the regulars at the Charles-Ten call it "Stella's" or "Stella's Charles-Ten",

Some of the photos here are meant to show the rooms. Others are meant to show the people. In the latter case, the names of the people in the photos are included in the captions. A big "Thank you" goes out to Michael J. Moriarty, a "regular" of Stella's Charles-Ten for his help in identifying the people in the photos.



Ann in the kitchen



Brian Rocheleau and Customer Jamie McNamara process first credit card at the bar, March 10, 2010





Michael J. Moriarty and Tanya Petrovets



Grandfather Ray "Frenchy" Oulette, Candi Motuzick, granddaughter Olivia Mikan, daughter Beth Motuzick, mother Elaine Mancino. **Five generations at the Charles-Ten.**



Tommy Matenson, Ann Tenerowicz, Michael J. Moriarty, Michele Taylor  
and 34 year bartender, Brian Rocheleau



The Dining Room

## Stella's Wit and Wisdom

Stella's wit, wisdom and philosophy are well stated in the following signs.

- \* Now Accepting Discover, Visa and Mastercards \*
- \* Ten Dollar Minimum Purchase \*
- \* We Accept Travelers Checks or U.S. Currency \*



Stella's  
Charles-Ten Restaurant

47 South Main St.  
Windsor Locks, CT 06096  
(860) 623-7449

Exit 42 off Interstate 91  
Route 159

Business Conducted  
Sunday through Friday 4pm-1am  
Food Served 4pm-11pm  
Closed Saturdays

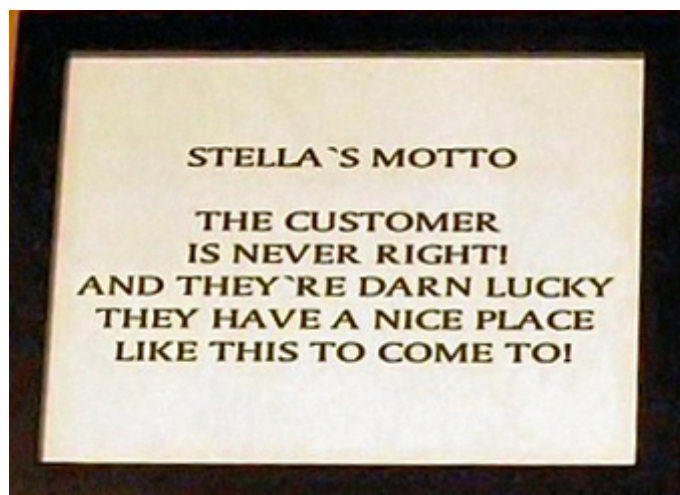
In 1942, along with family and close friends, Stella and Charlie Tenerowicz built this restaurant brick-by-brick. The decor consists of memorabilia collected throughout some sixty years. From the east to the west coast, various newspaper articles have been written about our cozy tavern, which is now the oldest existing eatery in the town of Windsor Locks.

Stella's Charles-Ten Restaurant takes pride in continuing to prepare meals in the traditional form of "home-style" cooking. We do not engage in modern methods of fast foods and microwave ovens. Instead, we cook each order individually in cast iron frying pans, from our own family recipes.

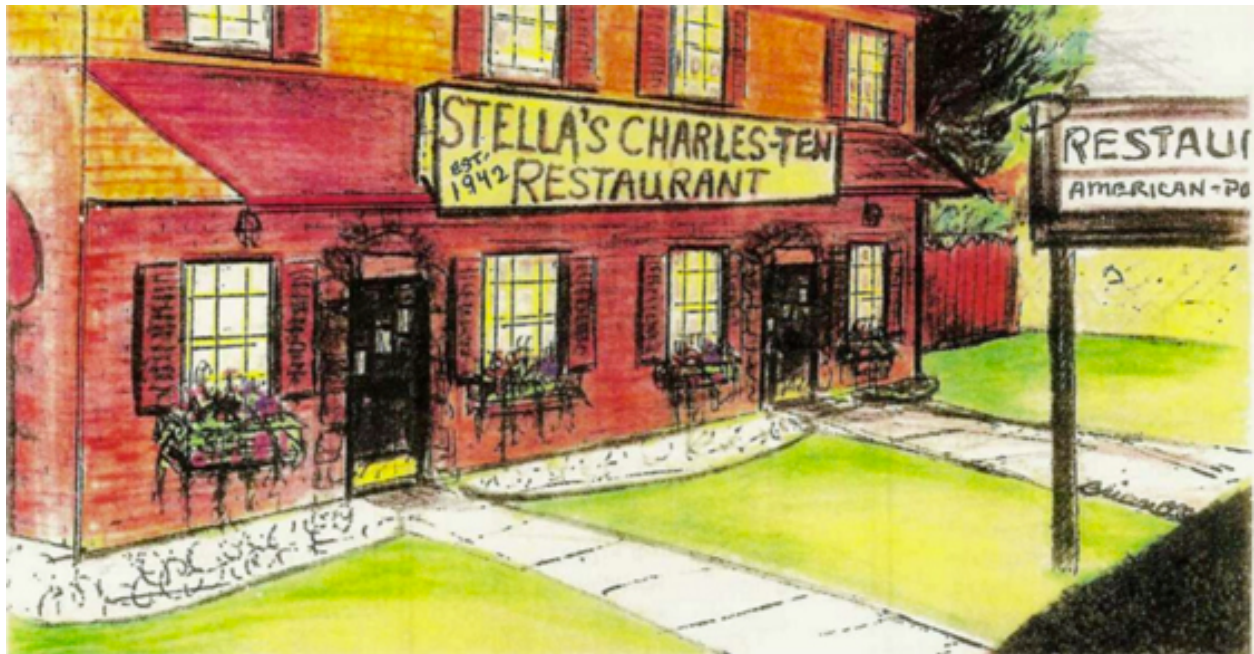
Not only is the food traditional, but our fourth generation clientele is as well. From blue collar workers to the renowned Boston great Carl "Yaz" Yazstrzemski, people from all walks of life have been steadily congregating here with a true feeling of comradery. We are proud to be a symbol of the "Ol' Neighborhood Tavern," a melting pot of Americana.

Welcome and Na'Zdrowie!

Souvenir Menus Available \$3.00 *Color*



Below the Painting is Stella's motto, followed by the Best Kept Secrets of Windsor Locks.



**STELLA'S MOTTO:** "Eat before you come here to eat."

...because the wait can be as fast as twenty minutes or as slow as two hours. All cooking is limited to just one small stove. Therefore, to avoid any impatience, if you're in a rush, please ask for the "waiting time" before you order food.

## *The Best Kept Secrets of Windsor Locks!!*

- HOME OF THE LATE ELLA T. GRASSO, THE FIRST WOMAN IN THE UNITED STATES TO BE ELECTED GOVERNOR ON HER OWN!
- HOME OF THE ONLY OPERATING CANAL AND LOCKS IN NEW ENGLAND!
- HOME OF THE ONLY AIR MUSEUM IN NEW ENGLAND!
- HOME OF BRADLEY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT!
- HOME OF THE DEXTER CORPORATION, THE OLDEST AMERICAN CORPORATION LISTED ON THE NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE!
- HOME OF HAMILTON STANDARD, THE COMPANY WHERE THE ASTRONAUTS' SPACESUITS ARE MADE!
- AND, THE ONLY TOWN WITH A ONE-SIDED MAIN STREET!
- *Come and bring the Family . . .  
Discover even more about Windsor Locks!!*

## Conclusion

I hope you have enjoyed this brief history of Stella's Charles-Ten Restaurant. We began with a 1942 advertisement which announced the opening of the restaurant. It focussed on seafood, steaks and chicken dinners. Later we saw how that original focus morphed into a focus on Polish and Italian dinners. We saw newspaper clippings about hiring of a chef in 1944, a night cook in 1946, and a fire in 1953.

Then a photo of a framed newspaper column on a wall of the restaurant, which turned out to be a history of the Charles-Ten Restaurant, was transcribed and included here in its entirety. It was an excellent column by Jack Redmond in the Windsor Locks Journal, which for decades has not been available either on paper or on the internet. Jack had spent a good deal of time interviewing Ann Tenerowicz and the result was a very personal account of the history of the restaurant.

To make this historical review more visual and visceral, a number of photos were added. They were of Charles, Stella, Ann, Brian and their guests in the bar, and in the dining room. We ended with some of the unique wit, wisdom and philosophy of Stella.

Jack Redmond's 1988 article showed, quoted Ann as wanting to retire at an appropriate time in her life. In March 2016, there is a sign in front of the restaurant, showing that the business is up for sale. Ann is making good on her promise to herself. More power to her for doing that.

Those of us who are from Windsor Locks owe a large debt of gratitude to Ann and to her parents, Charles and Stella, and to Brian and the staff of Stella's Charles-Ten Restaurant for making the restaurant into a lasting, unique and beautiful Windsor Locks phenomenon.

There is no more fitting way to end this article than to re-use the sentence that Jack Redmond used to end his column on the history of the Charles-Ten Restaurant:

**“The Tenerowicz family has made their restaurant a town landmark, and have earned a special place in the history of Windsor Locks.”**

Thank you very much for reading this article. Please pass it along to anyone you know who might be interested in it.

Mel Montemerlo

## Epilogue:

*Powodzenia Ann i Brian. Niech moc będzie z Tobą.*

For those few who don't speak Polish, that translates to  
“Good luck to Ann and Brian. May the Force be with you.”