Everybody is the best at something and that goes for all the towns in our readership area, most of them in New Haven County. We think there’s more to our towns than crime rates and politics, so we reported until we came up with an honor that every town could wear with pride, or at least a wink and a nudge.

**Ansonia**
While Ansonia is the top for many reasons to many people, one of its most enduring claims to history is its more than century-old high school football rivalry with Naugatuck High School, where the record stands at 68-34-10. Dating to 1883, it is the oldest high school football rivalry in New Haven County. Ansonia gets boasting rights as its currently dominant in the rivalry, which is played out every year on Thanksgiving Day and routinely draws crowds of up to 10,000 people. According to the site [www.myfootballblog.com](http://www.myfootballblog.com) (Naugatuck Valley League Football), the widest margin of victory was recorded by Ansonia in the 1996 matchup when the game ended 79-0, while the narrowest margin of victory was in 2001 when Naugatuck won, 14-13.

**Beacon Falls**
A gravel pit in Beacon Falls could become the world’s largest fuel cell park in the near future,
Wheeler's Island is one of several islands in the Thimble Island chain off Branford's coastline.

providing enough energy to power over 60,000 homes and displacing a fuel cell park in South Korea as the world's largest. The project's lead, CT Energy & Technology, would develop and own the fuel cell park, which would be located on a new seawall of fuel cells from FuelCell Energy Inc. in Danbury. Fuel cells harvest hydrogen from natural gas, then convert that hydrogen into heat and electricity. A fuel cell can be as small as a mobile home and emits only trace amounts of pollutants. The fuel cell park would take up about 8 acres.

Bethany
In addition to being a popular girl's name — with the high-water mark being in 1894 when the Social Security Administration reported that 9,612 babies were named Bethany in Connecticut — Bethany is one of the wealthiest towns in New Haven County, with an average annual median household income around $120,000, and its average SAT scores are well above average. Soon, the town will be home to the first co-housing community in Connecticut. The 54-home enclave called Rocky Corner will have 90 homes surrounded on 4 acres by woodlands, fields, pastures and ponds. Co-housing is designed specifically to bring people and families closer together, literally and figuratively.

Branford
It might be the winner of most restaurants and breweries per square foot of any shoreline town, but that's a constantly moving target, so we're giving Branford the Coastal King title for having the most bars relative to its size. The Chester-Hadlyme ferry is the country's oldest operating ferry, transporting passengers across the Connecticut River. These days, the ferry, which takes 8 minutes, connects eager visitors to the Essex Steam Train on one side of the river and Gillette Castle on the other.

Chester
Chester takes the QTP (Quaint Transportation Performer) because for nearly 255 years, the Chester-Hadlyme ferry has been bringing visitors across the Connecticut River. These days, the ferry, which takes 8 minutes, connects eager visitors to the Essex Steam Train on one side of the river and Gillette Castle on the other.

Clintons
He spent his childhood summers at the beach in Clinton, enjoying the company of pink and purple kittens, here, he collected seashells and sand and grime and might have even learned to rhyme.

Durham
Even if you've lived under a rock or in the quietest parts of Connecticut's Quiet Corner, you've heard about the Durham Fair: It is the second largest in New England (an entire continent) without paid management or employees. The four-day extravaganza, held the last weekend of each September, will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2019. It has been an annual event except for 1938 (the hurricane) and the World War II years of 1942, 1943 and 1944.

Facts: The fair has awarded more than $500,000 in prizes.
The Griswold Inn in Essex is one of the oldest continuously operating inns in the country. In academic scholarships since 1896, and it played a role in organizing the Durham District Nurse Association.

**East Haven**

Connecticut’s aviation history is rich (you’ve heard our contention that we were first in flight, right? Move over Wright Brothers). Anyway, Greater New Haven played more than a bit part. First there were the Yale tutorials who built and launched hot air balloons in the 1700s, followed more than a century later by an actual early plane landing at Yale Field. By 1909, they were breaking ground on what would become Tweed Airport, which straddles the East Haven-New Haven border. It opened in 1912 and its first manager was pilot Jack Tweed, who remained until 1983. Besides Bradley International Airport near the Massachusetts border, Tweed is the only other airline airport in the state. It averages more than 500 aircraft operations (takeoffs or landings) a day.

**Essex**

Yes, yes, this riverfront town has got the famous Essex Steam Train, the charming Connecticut River Museum and a delightfully quaint downtown, but it’s tops to us because of “The Gris.” The Griswold Inn is one of the oldest in the country, having opened “for business to yachtsmen and landlubber travelers” in 1776. The inn, founded by three brothers according to its Wikipedia page, has been run by only six families since the inn and the country were born and remains a popular dining spot for special occasions in particular.

**Fun fact:** The popular vampire soap opera “Dark Shadows” filmed many of its scenes at the inn.

**Guilford**

Green. It’s almost impossible to say Guilford without following it with “green,” that sweetly New England parcel of land that hosts major events as well as impromptu picnics and provides beautiful scenery to shops, restaurants and more. But there’s more to Guilford, lots more. For bragging rights, Guilford gets to be the smallest town in New Haven County. At 48.7 square miles, it edges out Haddam at 65.4 square miles, and Wallingford at 39.3, rounding out the top three.

**Hamden**

It’s impossible to talk about youth hockey in Connecticut without talking about Hamden. New Haven might have been the birthplace of hockey in Connecticut, but Hamden is where it spent its rowdy youth and high school years. Midway between the battlefield on which Yale and the Olympics universities wage the War on Whitney Avenue, Hamden High School’s hockey team can hold its head high. The team has won 17 state championships (most recently five years ago) and a national championship in 1970. It was the original home team of Jonathan Quick, a Stanley Cup champion goals who plays for the L.A. Kings.

**Madison**

Home of champions. Mac Beeken and Skip Eberle are the top male and female aerialists in the world following this winter’s freestyle ski competition in the 2014 Olympics, the Daniel Hand Boys Ice Hockey team won the Southern Connecticut Conference Division II in 2014; and “Madison” was the top girl baby names for Connecticut babies in 2014. The town gets both honors. In one poem, “The Birds of Killingworth” are part of the “Tales of a Wayside Inn”, which Longfellow published in three parts from 1853 to 1873. This one, told in rhyme, is about farmers so annoyed by marauding birds that they decide to kill them off.

“...And only to the earth, Heard with alarm the coming of the crow... They shook their heads, and doosed with drowsy words... To swift destruction the whole race of birds... The birds were doomed... and, as the record shows, A beastly offer'd for the honors of the race... Its gone pretty bloody after that. By the following spring, Killingworth realized his mistake and welcomed birds back. Other than that, it’s a lovely town.

**Killingworth**

Not many towns in Connecticut can claim to have been made famous by the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow or for killing birds. This town gets both honors. In one poem, “The Birds of Killingworth” are part of the “Tales of a Wayside Inn”, which Longfellow published in three parts from 1853 to 1873. This one, told in rhyme, is about farmers so annoyed by marauding birds that they decide to kill them off.

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**American Idol winner Neil Tribani performs at a concert on Guilford Town Green several months ago.**
Social Security Administration recently reported that 120 Connecticut newborn girls were named Madison last year. And the biggest brag? The highest average SAT scores in New Haven County — 603 reading, 673 writing and 677 math. Each of those average scores are 75 points or higher above the state averages, according to www.cerec.com.

Meriden
Castle Craig. Anyone who has driven along I-91, or I-84 or I-95 for that matter, has seen the century-old "castle" perched atop Hubbard Park. The 63-foot-tall castle has a plaque that says, in part: "It has the distinction of being the highest point within 25 miles (40 km) of the coast from Maine to Florida." Meriden industrialist Walter Hubbard donated the tower and the surrounding park, which a grateful Meriden named after him. "Turns out, the plaque is inaccurate regarding its 'highest point' claim — as the castle's Wikipedia page reports — but no one disputes that Hubbard was a veritable giant.

Middlefield
Small but mighty Middlefield has about 4,500 residents but a rich past. Two of its most prominent citizens, William Lyman and "Princess" Miller Auger, led the way in opposing the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Lyman's farm (you know Lyman Orchards, of course, owned and operated there since 1741) was a station stop on the Underground Railroad and Auger was a "conductor.

Middletown
Where to begin — the riverfront? Wesleyan University? Oddfellows Playhouse? Xavier? All wonderful, but we gotta go with O'Burke's Diner, which has had several lives itself, enriched thousands of others and nursed the hangovers of more than a few college kids. It began in 1941, when an O'Burke (Jack) bought Durr's Diner and five years later replaced it with the shiny new diner. It thrives for decades, succumbs to fire in 2006, and thanks to the community rises from its ashes.

Milford
At least in New Haven County Milford puts the beach in shoreline with the longest stretch of shoreline of any town in Connecticut. There are five public beaches, seven private beaches and a boardwalk (rebuilt since Irene and Sandy) that stretches from Silver Sands State Park to Walnut Beach in Devon.

Naugatuck
Kids. The best makers of all time according to many were made in Naugatuck, from 1877 to the 1980s with the early models including heels and lady face-ups that went at least half way up the skin. A shoutout to Naugatuck's U.S. Rubber Co., whose product was far more inventive than its name.

New Haven
Yale, schmule. Sure we love the old school, but there's so much more to New Haven. First off, the city that this year launched its ambitious Greatest Small City in American campaign (GSCIA, if you haven't heard), the most populous being in the country, with 125,868 citizens as of 2020, with Waterbury running the closest second with 129,074. Third place is a virtual tie between Hamden with 60,735 citizens and Meriden with 60,676.

Fun facts: It also has the best pizza in America, according to USA Today and everyone else.
North Branford

In 1951, brothers Henry Stevens and David Stevens Jr. established a thriving card business in Northford. They made the usual business cards for men but added their own creations—Christian cards, valentines and 'sparking' cards, carrying appropriate messages. By 1971 they were experimenting with highly ornamented Christmas cards. The Stevens brothers' sons found themselves competing with 25 other Christmas card companies—all in Northford.

For 10 years Northford led the industry in production of Christmas cards. Northford historian Dr. Henry C. Miller wrote in the Journal of the New Haven Colony Historical Society.

Fun fact: The town hosts an annual Potato and Corn Festival.

North Haven

Two years ago North Haven became home to one of a dozen new medical schools in the country. The Frank H. Netter M.D. School of Medicine at Quinnipiac University was created to address, in part, an anticipated increase in medical care needs following the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, as well as the aging baby boomer population. The class that began in autumn 2011 had 580 students chosen from a field of 5,592 applicants.

Old Saybrook

Old Saybrook Breakwater Light is the model for the lighthouse on Connecticut’s “Preserve The Sound” license plates. The 157-year-old lighthouse, which marks the entrance channel to the mouth of the Connecticut River, is for sale.

Orange

The town of Orange did its part during the Cold War to protect New Haven from Boris and Natasha by hosting a Nike missile site. The anti-aircraft missiles were deployed after World War II as a check on advancing jet technology. When Nike missile sites around the country were decommissioned, the properties were offered first to government agencies, and Orange’s facility became the home of what is today the 120th Air Control Squadron, a part of the Connecticut Air National Guard.

Fun facts: Pez candy is headquartered in Orange. Its distinctive dispenser, which looks like a lighter, was meant to encourage people to quit smoking.

Oxford

Sure, Oxford is in the top five when it comes to median household income (2012 figures), but the town easily wins as the absolute best place to live in all of New Haven county to enjoy private jet eye candy. And, the hangar down test place to do it from is 125 Restaurant & Bar. Not only does it host some of the best reviews in the state for its food, but the views of everything from corporate jets to restored World War II aircraft are spectacular whether you are outside on the deck or inside at one of the long tables of tables along the window that parallels the runway. If it’s a good day perhaps you’ll get to see hedge fund magnate Paul Tudor Jones leave or arrive in his sporty private jet.etc.

Prospect

Robert J. Chatfield has been mayor of Prospect since 1970. As a reminder, in 1970, Jimmy Carter was president of the United States, the movie “Grease” was debuting in summer movie screens and the average cost for a gallon of gas was 28 cents. It was also the year that Germany stopped producing the Volkswagen Beetle and in the world of technology the first computer bulletin board system BBS was created. No wonder he is the longest serving mayor in Connecticut.

Shelton

Shelton is home to one of the top five private employers in Connecticut’s central coast based on number of employees. According to connecticutdevelopment.com, the EIC Corp. has some 900 employees in Shelton. And EIC is not alone in Shelton’s business community, which also includes Transwitch Corp., Latax International, Enhanced Care Initiative LLC, Corporate Management Solutions, Survey Sampling Int’l LLC, Nielsen Monitor Plan, Harford and Precision Resource—all with 200 or more employees.

Fun fact: Shelton was named “The Best Affordable Suburb in Connecticut” by Bloomberg Businessweek in 2009 and 2010.

Southbury

The quiet town in New Haven County—the median age is the highest at 50—so it’s not surprising to learn that the town in 1999 rejected Nazi camps. That move inspired the 2002 documentary “Home of the Brave.”

Wallingford

Wallingford scores the heady steadiness that typifies Connecticut towns, given that it is home to one of the longest serving mayors, William W. Dickinson Jr. And if that weren’t enough, Wallingford scores the heady steadiness that typifies Connecticut towns, given that it is home to one of the longest serving mayors, William W. Dickinson Jr. And if that weren’t enough,

West Haven

The University of New Haven, one of the fastest growing universities in Connecticut, is on 62 acres in West Haven where it serves more than 6,500 undergraduates and many of its 4,600 graduate students. The university has five colleges and of those perhaps best known are its Tagliatela College of Engineering, which was honored as Top Tier Nationally by U.S. News & World Report's Best College's edition in 2014, and its Henry C. Lee College of Criminal Justice and Forensic Sciences. Under President Steven H. Kahl, some $775 million has been invested in the university’s infrastructure.

Westbrook

As shoreline communities go, Westbrook residents often identify by their beach community. There are more than a dozen private beach associations in town: Chapman Beach, Coral Sands, Grove Beach Point, Grove Beach Terrace, Horse Hill, Island View, Kelsey Point, Little Standish, Middle Beach, Pilot’s Point, Pol:itema, Quoetam Beach, Sagamore Terrace, Salt Works, Stanard Beach and West Beach.

Fun fact: Actor Art Carney (Norm on the classic TV show “The Honeymooners”) spent much of his later life at his home in Westbrook.

Woodbridge

This New Haven suburb of about 5,800 people tops honors as the wealthiest and brainiest. Figures for 2012 show Woodbridge has the highest median household income in the county at $73,190. It’s closest competition—and still cracking the six-figure ceiling—were Bethany at $70,524, Oxford at $70,240, Madison at $67,804 and Cheshire at $60,842. No other town in New Haven County can touch Woodbridge for percentage of people (age 25 and older) with a bachelor’s degree or higher because in town, 63 percent, or about two out of every three people, have attained that educational level.

Waterbury

The Brass City is perhaps most famous for its famous people, who include actor Dylan McDermott (“The Practice”); photographer Annie Leibovitz; actor Bob Crane (“ Hogan’s Heroes”); actress Rosalind Russell (“The Gail Friday”); Michael J. McGinnis, Catholic priest and founder of the Knights of Columbus; Porter Goss, former director of the CIA; and Joan Joyce, All-American soccer player who also excelled in basketball, bowling and golf. And there are dozens more.