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## The Thread City Beauty Parlor

These photographs recall a bygone age, the roaring twenties when Willimantic's cotton and silk mills were in full production, giving a regular wage and employment to thousands of French Canadian and Polish families. In such a community supporting businesses and industries grew rapidly, providing commercial and personal services for the population. One such business was the Thread City Beauty Parlor.

The Thread City Beauty Parlor



John Potvin Sr., from Quebec Province, arrived in Willimantic after the Civil War and worked cutting hair, mending umbrellas and repairing shoes. From 1900 he was providing these services in shops located on Church Street, then Ash street, on Jackson street and Temple Street. In 1909, John Potvin Jr. joined his father in the trade. In 1915 the enterprising son also worked as an ice dealer from his 109 Main Street barber shop. In 1923, John Potvin Jr. and his wife Louise were cutting hair at 3 Temple Street. Trade boomed and in 1925 John Jr. and Louise crossed busy Union

Street and opened the Thread City Beauty Parlor at No 17 Union Street. It is pictured here shortly after its opening. John Potvin Jr., Louise and their son Arthur can be seen in the doorway of their new business. The owners and staff can also be seen posing in the retail and beautifying sections inside the store; permanent waves a speciality! Also note Dr. Girouard's office above the shop. The building was located almost opposite the Baptist Church, and was demolished in 1974.

In 1935, the Thread City Beauty Parlor relocated to 796 Main Street, and became better known as Potvin's Beauty Shop. John Potvin Jr. died in 1941, but his wife Louise remarried some years later and kept the business going until her death in 1953, aged 62. Young Arthur Potvin went on to take over a Willimantic and New England institution, The Hosmer Mountain Soda Company. More about that organization in a few weeks time.

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