

August 15, 1998

## Clark Terry Carried on Joseph Lewis' Legacy (Part Two of Two)

The 1862 Lewis Homestead, the center of Willimantic's historic City Market gardens, is seen here from Terry Avenue.



Joseph A. Lewis (1829-1900) Willimantic's leading market gardener, was also a leading figure in the Prohibitionist party, and became very active in the Willimantic local. He managed the Lewis Nursery for almost 42 years, and saw it grow from a small nine-acre plot, to over 100 acres in the northern part of the city. Lewis' extensive business was also known as the City Market Gardens. Lewis died in March 1900, after a short illness. He left

the entire business in the hands of his assistant, Clark Olney Terry, who carried on the J. A. Lewis vegetable and fruit farm until his own death in 1916.

Clark O. Terry was born in Exeter, Rhode Island in 1848, and located permanently to Willimantic in 1870 to assist Joseph Lewis. He moved into the Lewis household, and soon became the manager of the market gardens, and was an influential figure in the growth and popularity of the business. Terry was from a prominent Rhode Island family, and was sent to be educated at Jabez Fitch's prestigious Pine Hill Academy in South Windham. It was here that he first became acquainted with J. A. Lewis, who was a young schoolmaster at the Academy. Terry eventually married the boss's daughter, Cora A. Lewis, in Willimantic in 1879. Like his father-in-law, Terry was a staunch Prohibitionist, and was prominent in the local Baptist church. A 1903 biography of Terry noted how Lewis and Terry had worked in harmony for many years, and that after Lewis' death, the continuing fine appearance of the farm and gardens gives evidence of a master hand in charge. Terry also worked a farm in North Windham, but after his death in 1916, Willimantic's famous market gardens went into decline and would soon be swallowed by suburban expansion. Clark O. Terry died at 315 Jackson Street on January 30, 1916. The business and land came into the possession of his wife, Cora Lewis Terry. The estate was slowly sold off, and Mrs. Terry relocated to St. Paul Minnesota. In April 1923 she sold the remaining section of the historic Lewis market gardens to Arthur J. Dubreuil. It was noted at the time that this was a valuable piece of real estate this was, consisting of 10 acres of land, house and barns bounded on the west by Jackson Street, on the east by the New Haven railroad, on the south by the Capen property, and on the north by the Frye property. It had a frontage of 570 feet on Jackson Street and a depth of 860 feet.

Dubreuil immediately announced that he was to break up the property for building lots. he planned to open up two streets through the property from west to east to link

Jackson Street and Hope Street, called Terry street and Wood Street. This latter subsequently became known as Terry Avenue and Terry Street became known Ann Street, named for Clark and Cora Terry. Dubreuil also hoped to purchase the Frye property and develop it, and extend Hope Street to Ash Street. The farmland was eventually developed. Today the Frye property consists of a BP station, a Jewish temple, Normandy Avenue, Canal Street, Coral Street, Terry Court and Coral Street. Today, at the junction of Jackson Street and Terry Avenue, the old Lewis property stands on the southern corner, at 315 Jackson Street, and the home of Curbstone Press, a house built in the 1930s, stands on the northern corner at 321 Jackson Street. So this area of Willimantic has moved on from broccoli, beans and berries to books.