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## William Vanderman

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It's just a vacant lot on the southwest corner of Valley Street and Mansfield Avenue today, but at the turn of the century, this area housed a vibrant and well-known plumbing and heating manufactory. The Vanderman Plumbing and Heating Company was incorporated in Willimantic in 1892. Its founder, William Vanderman, was born and educated in Hartford, where he also learnt the trade of plumber. He arrived in Willimantic in 1879 at the age of 27, and established a plumbing shop in the basement of the Holmes building at 719 Main Street. His trade soon grew and he transferred to larger buildings, setting up his business in the Turner Block at 41 Church Street -- the building featured in last weeks article. Trade increased further and

in 1892 he built a modern new factory and workshop at 152 Valley Street. It was state-of-the-art in the 1890s. The plant was heated by a sophisticated system of steam power, located through its three floors. Vanderman manufactured his own heaters in the new workshops. By this time he had already patented several ideas for adaptation on steam boilers. The growth of the firm continued, and in 1899 he purchased the vacant Gorry iron foundry on Mansfield Avenue. This foundry had played a very important part in the city's industrial history, supplying the cotton and silk industries. In 1911 Vanderman added a 90 x 50 feet concrete extension.

Vanderman's firm engaged primarily in plumbing, heating, steam and gas installations and ventilation systems. The Vanderman Company also became well known, across the United States and in Europe, for the design and manufacture of new and improved tools for the plumbing trade. The Company worked on some of Willimantic's largest buildings such as the State Normal School and the Murray Building. They also fulfilled many lucrative contracts in cities and towns around the state. Vanderman was active in local politics and displayed a keen interest in the industrial growth of Willimantic. He was the democratic counselor of the Second Ward 1895 - 96, and was actively involved in the Board of Trade and the local Businessmen's Association. In 1912, Vanderman turned over part of his recently built concrete extension to a new Box Company that wished to locate in town but who could not find suitable accommodation for their business. When Vanderman's sons were old enough he trained them as mechanics and plumbers, and by 1908 he turned over his whole business, including a branch in Hartford, to them so he could concentrate on further inventions for the trade. He worked in his Valley Street shop and designed new toolboxes, bench vises and a device for bending pipe. Away from his work, Vanderman was actively involved in the charity work of the local St Vincent De Paul and was a member of the Knights of Columbus. He died in Willimantic on September 11, 1914, aged 62 at his fine home at 3 Turner Street.