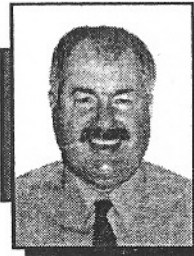


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History

The fascinating history of the Mazzola block



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Part one of five

In 1999 a local survey reported that a Main Street, Willimantic commercial block, built in 1892, had no significant historical value, and it was slated for demolition to provide extra downtown parking.

Generations of locals know the building as the Mazzola Block. Contrary to that survey, the building at 931-935 Main St. has a fascinating history. The Mazzola Block has been saved. It was purchased by David Hemenway, and will soon be known as the Thread City Café. Here's the story of the building with no history.

In the 1880s, Irish-born Daniel F. Flaherty was a well-known character around the streets of Willimantic. This colorful character had been a semi-professional



The building known as the Mazzola block was recently saved from demolition and will be renovated.

boxer and a professional pool player. He also had an entrepreneurial eye for business, and on July 23, 1891 he purchased an ancient Main Street tenement house and barns from Martin Flaherty. Daniel Flaherty was becoming respectable, and he planned to build a fine new business block with apartments in

the rapidly expanding city.

In December 1891, a local businessman, Samuel Adams, purchased the barn on Flaherty's new property and moved it to his High Street lot. In February 1892, Daniel Flaherty commissioned the well-known local builder Michael Sullivan, to erect the Flaherty Block on the site of

the old tenement house. A section of the house was taken down and re-assembled in the rear of the lot to allow for the excavation of a cellar.

The remaining wooden structures were demolished in March 1892, and construction progressed rapidly. On April 27, 1892, the *Willimantic Chronicle* noted that "The substantial foundation for Flaherty's new brick block on upper Main Street is well advanced by Michael Sullivan."

On May 24, 1892, it was reported that the "timbers for the first floor in Flaherty Block on Upper Main Street are being placed into position today." Work on Flaherty's new business and residential block continued throughout the summer of 1892. In August, Arman Trudeau, a local grocer, rented the new block's west store.

The Flaherty Block was completed in September 1892 and its eight apartments were immediately rented.

On Oct., 10, 1892 a concrete block was laid in front of the block so residents and customers could avoid the mud and water so prevalent on Willimantic's gravelled streets and wooden side-

walks. The borough authorities renumbered its homes and businesses in late 1892 and the new Flaherty block became 931, 933 and 935 Main St., Willimantic.

The latest addition to Main became the home of varied businesses.

Number 933 was the address of the block's apartments on the second and third floors. The first tenants in the new building reflected the city's Irish and French Canadian population in 1892.

They were: James Moriarty, John J. Murphy, Bridget Shea, Mary Sullivan, Patrick Moynahan, Bridget Moynahan, Bridget Golden, Aman Trudeau, Arthur Trudeau, Joseph Moison, Louis Dupont, and Joseph Caillouette.

Businesses in 1931, the east store, from 1893 until 1919 were Aman Trudeau, grocer, 1892 and 1897; James Gleave, grocer, 1898, Frank P. Brown and J. Edward Dainton, grocers, 1899, 1902-1905, Sarah Way, baker, 1903-1905, Thread City Laundry, 1906, 1913, Isadore Heller, shoemaker and repairer, grocer, 1914-1916.

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