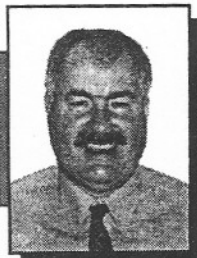


## History

# For drinkers, bushels of clams



Tom  
Beardsley

### Part four of five

The advent of prohibition after the 1919 Volstead Act radically changed the business focus of the Flaherty/Gelinas block. It also changed the building's ethnic ownership. The French Canadians had purchased the building from the Irish, and now the Italians, or to be precise, the Sicilians took it over.

Saloons and taverns had been an integral part of the building but under Michele Mazzola, a diversity of businesses replaced the selling and consumption of alcohol, thus providing a continuous rental income in this vibrant, commercial section of the city.

Business tenants in the Mazzola block included a shoemaker, tailor, real estate and an auto parts supplier.

Automobiles arrived in the block in 1923 when Robert G. Remington opened an auto parts and supplies business in the saloon premises at 935 Main St.

From 1927 until 1931, Anton-Rudolph Bousa operated Bousa Motor Sales from the same premises, selling Chevrolets, and displayed two cars in the showroom. Michael Mazzola recalls that there was a side entrance with

## Bousa Motor Sales Co.

SALES  SERVICE

*For Economical Transportation*

935 Main Street      PHONE 268      Willimantic, Conn.

*Anton-Rudolph Bousa advertises his auto business in the 1928 City Directory. It was located in the Mazzola block's west store.*

two big glass doors that allowed the cars to be driven into the store for display. The Dunlop Tire and Rubber Co. joined Bousa in 1928.

In 1932 the old saloon was taken over by the Willimantic Motor Sales Co. for the sale and service of Ford automobiles.

Prohibition was over in 1936 and the old saloon was rented to Solomon Haddad. The Haddads sold hops for beer brewing and once a week sold clams. They paid \$3 per bushel and sold three bushels of clams to the thirsty drinkers every Friday evening.

During World War II, the basement of the building was commandeered by the state and used as a store for canned goods in the event of air raids or invasion. Michele's son Mariano Mazzola worked at an aircraft factory.

Also at this time the saloon premises became vacant. In 1948, the Mazzolas moved the grocery business from the store in 931 to the old saloon premises at 935 Main St., and renamed it

Mazzola Market Grocers.

The store at 931 briefly became a war surplus variety store, and was vacant in the post war period.

Mariano (Michael) Mazzola recalled that from 1956 he sold Hotpoint electrical appliances at 931. He became the largest dealer east of the Connecticut River, selling appliances to owners of apartment buildings.

The Mazzolas took the middle beam out of the building, and put up steel to make it safe, so they could run the grocery store and appliance store in conjunction.

Mike Mazzola delivered the appliances himself and ran both businesses with his sister, Mary.

Michele carried on with the grocery business until his death from cardiac arrest on Sept. 25, 1972, at age 88. His son Mike continued the grocery business his father had begun almost 60 years previously.

*Concluded next week*