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## History

# 18 Bellevue St. an example of Yankee elite



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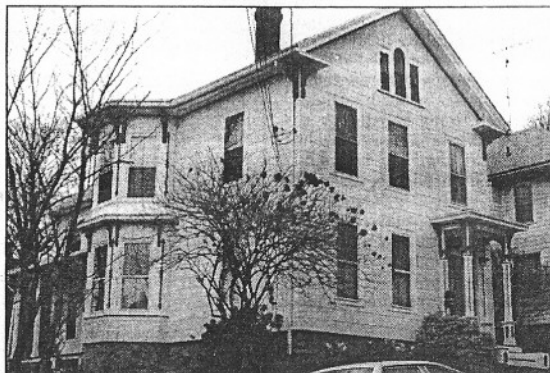
Next weekend sees the arrival of Willimantic's second Victorian Home Show and Symposium. Ten hill district homes will be opened to the public, including for the first time the Ivan House at 18 Bellevue St. It is an important inclusion to the tour as it represents the first developments of Prospect Hill, and is also representative of the Yankee elite whose financial clout helped develop Willimantic after the Civil War.

In 1869, the borough of Willimantic undertook a program to accurately name each street in the rapidly growing community. In 1868, Prospect Street was laid out between Jackson and High streets by local landowners Edwin Buck and Allen Lincoln. Shortly after the Civil War, local merchant Arthur S. Turner and builder Don F. Johnson built houses to the east of Church Street, and a north/south thoroughfare developed between Maple Avenue and Prospect Street. The new thoroughfare became

known as "Turner's Street." It was subsequently renamed Bellevue Street in the 1869 rationalization of street names. The name appears as "Bellvieu Street" on an 1869 map of Willimantic. The current Turner Street to the east of Bellevue Street, was laid between Maple and Summit streets in the 1880s.

In 1874, local building contractors, Reed and Ticknor purchased a lot from Arthur S. Turner and built a house. It was sold to a local businessman, Amos T. Fowler (1825-1911). He moved into the new house the following year. Fowler was born in Lebanon, a direct descendant of English-born William Fowler, a Puritan-Congregationalist minister who died in New Haven in 1661. William Fowler's grandson settled in the Goshen Society of Lebanon in 1702, building a farmhouse. Five subsequent generations of Fowlers were born in the Goshen house, including Amos Tertius Fowler who so named because he was the third Amos Fowler.

Amos Tertius Fowler was educated in Lebanon and at Colchester's Bacon Academy. In 1844, his father appointed him as an aide-de-camp in the State Militia with the rank of Major. He married Ann Eliza Seaman at Babylon, Long Island in



Mike Mazzola

The house at 18 Bellevue St. will be featured in the second annual Willimantic Victorian Home Show and Symposium May 6 and 7.

1850, and the couple relocated to Lebanon to work on the family farm. Being aware of the rapid growth and opportunities in nearby Willimantic, Fowler moved his family to the growing borough in 1866, purchasing a farm from Alfred Young. Fowler ran a farm and dairy, supplying the rapidly growing Irish and French-Canadian silk and cotton mill population. The 18th century Young/Fowler farmhouse, a one-story structure, still stands on the west side of South Street near the junction with Pleasant Street.

In 1868, Fowler entered into a partnership in a butcher shop, located on the corner of Main and Railroad streets, with John Porter. In 1869, he formed a partnership with Arthur B. Carpenter in a hardware business, which became known as Carpenter and Fowler and was one of the largest of its kind in eastern Connecticut. Carpenter and Fowler continued the business until 1888. A.T. Fowler purchased Carpenter's share, and gave it to his son, Frank S.

Fowler (1851-1913). A.T. Fowler and Son continued the business until 1892.

After his 1892 retirement from the hardware business, Amos T. Fowler became closely involved in the industrial, financial and commercial affairs of Willimantic. He was president and an organizer of the Merchant's Loan and Trust Co., vice president of the First National Bank, a director of the Dime Savings Bank, and an organizer of the Morrison Machine Co., Willimantic's forgotten but innovative silk spinning and weaving machine manufacturers from 1873 until their demise during the 1894 financial panic. A.T. Fowler was also the major financier and president of the Vanderman Plumbing and Heating Co., Willimantic's well-known and innovative industry.

Amos T. Fowler was also an organizer and director of the Hall and Bill Printing Co., which is still in business in town. This company published the daily newspaper, the Willi-

mantic Journal, from 1869 until 1911. Fowler was a Windham selectman for three years, and in 1883 he represented the town in the General Assembly. He was also highly active in the state Republican Party and the Willimantic Congregational Church.

Amos T. Fowler sold 18 Bellevue St. to his son Frank in 1902. The sale price included a bay horse, a carriage, a canopy top wagon and a buggy. Maj. Amos T. Fowler died of a kidney disease in Dr. Mason's private hospital in Willimantic on Aug. 9, 1911, at the age of 86. Frank S. Fowler died in 1913 and willed 18 Bellevue St. to his widow, Jennie (Alpaugh) Fowler. Jennie and Amos S. Fowler returned from Massachusetts to live in the house. Soon afterwards, Jennie was joined by her parents, Charles and Estella Alpaugh.

Amos S. Fowler died in 1944, and his mother Jennie (Alpaugh) Fowler died the following year. The house at 18 Bellevue St. had remained in the Fowler family for 70 years. It was sold in 1945 to Frederick John Woodward (1882-1958) and his wife Esther. Fred Woodward was born in Canada and came to Willimantic as a child. He worked as a plumber for more than 50 years and in his youth was a member of the Thread City Cyclers' basketball team.

Woodward's widow, Esther Simonds Woodward (1890-1984), continued to live in the house after her husband's death in 1958, until the early 1980s. Esther Woodward had sold 18 Bellevue St. to A.R. and D.L. Mingrone in 1983. They sold it to John Ivan in 1994, only the fifth owner of the 125-year-old house.