

— HISTORY —

# The continuing saga of the Hurley store

*Part two of three*

Hugh Clark Murray, the founder of the Boston Store and the builder of the store occupied by Hurley's from 1968 to 2001, often returned to his birthplace, Catrine, Ayrshire for vacations, and in his declining years he spent the winters in Florida.

He had been a keen supporter of a footbridge to connect Main Street with the growing southern section of the city, and it was probably no coincidence that the bridge's Main Street entrance was opposite his store.

Murray was also the financial muscle behind Willimantic's professional baseball team, the Willimantic Colts, during its 1901-07 existence.

The Boston Store was incorporated in 1905 under the name of the H. C. Murray Co. with Murray as president, James Porter Bath as secretary and treasurer, and Joseph B. Riordan and Robert M. Bath as directors. Murray retired

from the business in February, 1918, and the company continued to conduct business after his death in 1919.

The H. C. Murray Co., which marketed itself as the largest department store in Windham and Tolland Counties, celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in March 1939. Joseph B. Riordan was president and treasurer, the secretary was Luke P. Allain.

Ruth B. Adams was assistant secretary and treasurer and Delphis G. Boucher was director. At the time the Boston Store contained 15 separate departments, covered 31,350 square feet and employed 35 people. It had a free delivery service for customers, and occupied all four stories of the building. In 1952, Joe Riordan hired Hugh F. Langan as service



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manager. Riordan purchased the building in 1953, and extensively remodeled it. In May, 1955 the H. C. Murray Co. celebrated its 76<sup>th</sup> birthday, and a grand celebration was organized by the company's New York City buying office.

The H. C. Murray Co. continued to trade until 1967, but changing fashions and retail trends led to its closure.

However, this vast store was vacant for less than a year. Prior to redevelopment, this area, which contained Willimantic's Lincoln Square was the downtown retail center of the city.

The south side of Main Street at this point housed the Jordan, Union and the Hurley-Grant blocks, which contained stores such as Wolmer and Case, Fullerton and Fourniers, Lizee Jewellers, Hurley's, and the Hurley-Grant store.

The Turner and Commercial blocks were on the north side of Lincoln Square, between Church Street and the Baptist Church and



*The original Hurley's store at 700 Main St. was located in the Grant-Hurley block as shown in this 1964 photograph.*

contained the Church and Reed store, the Country Squire, Hurley's Prep Shop and the Sherwin Williams paint store.

The Commercial block was destroyed in the 1968 St. Valentine Day's fire, and the adjacent Turner block was demolished

several years later during redevelopment, but the Boston Store resisted the bulldozer thanks to the decision of the Hurley's stores to relocate there after the fire.

*Continued next week*

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