

— HISTORY —

Cardinal Square: Once a thriving business community

Cardinal Square

Today it's a small park and a parking lot on the junction of Ash and Route 6, but for almost a century this section of Willimantic, known as Cardinal Square and "Sodom," was home to a saloon and then a grocery store. The large building that housed them on the left of the accompanying photograph was built in 1898 as the Cardinal Saloon. It closed in 1919 when prohibition commenced, and was transformed into a grocery store. It stood vacant for many years and was finally demolished in 1992.

The photograph is from Jules Corn, the grandson of Max Rabinowitz, who was for many years the proprietor of the grocery store. It shows the Rabinowitz store, then trading as the Royal Scarlet Store just after the 1938 hurricane.

Francois Gamache lived in this area of town when he was a boy, and recalls that the flood waters stretched right up to Brook Street. Note the two boats, the gas station



Tom
Beardsley

behind the tree, and the crowd of people on the high ground. Jules Corn takes up the story: "The store in the picture was my grandfather's, Max Rabinowitz, and was run by him and his two sons, Louis and Hyman (Sonny). After World War II, the store was expanded to include the first floor porch and the sign changed to say Max Rabinowitz and Sons.

"They also had the gas station which had a repair bay added after

the war. Max, Sonny and my grandmother lived on the two top floors over the store. Tommy Meikle ran the gas station. The Meikles were a very athletic family.

"His brother, Artie, was described by the long time sports editor of the Courant, Bill Lee, as 'the best high school football player I ever saw.'

Their father played Major League baseball under the name of Art Nichols. The two houses in the background were the Archambeault homes. The mother and father lived in the one on the right. She was a very gracious lady who always gave me a nice tip for carrying her groceries.

"The son and his wife and three kids, Charles, Phillippe and Pierre, lived in the other house. The Archambeaults had the barber-shop in the Hooker Hotel



The Rabinowitz grocery store

"It was a little different place in those days. Notice the people on the wall in front of the houses. As you know, all that is left of the store and station today is a park." Thank you Jules for the photograph and your memories. The

photograph will appear on thread-city.com in a new section called picture of the week. If you have any old photographs of Willimantic, and a story to tell, let me know and I'll feature them.

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