

When the president came to Willimantic

Part One of Four

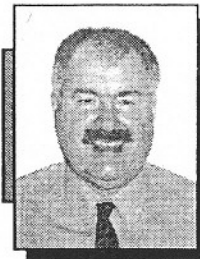
On Aug. 5, 1902 it was announced that President Theodore Roosevelt was to visit Hartford, on August 22 to make a public address in the Coliseum.

He planned to stay overnight in the city at the home of state official John T. Robinson on Asylum Avenue. The president would then head to Providence and Boston by train.

It was planned that the presidential locomotive should stop in Willimantic. Needless to say, the city fathers and populace of Windham and northeastern Connecticut were absolutely delighted.

It had been 22 years since ex-President Ulysses Grant had visited Willimantic to inspect the Linen Company's state-of-the-art mill number four, and "Teddy's" visit was eagerly awaited. He would become the first sitting president ever to visit the town of Windham.

The president's train was scheduled to depart Hartford at 8 a.m., and was to arrive in Willimantic at 9 a.m. The president's



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secretary, George Courtelyou, announced that Roosevelt would spend 20 minutes in Willimantic, and make a non-partisan public address.

On Aug. 14, 1902 the Willimantic City Council met and decided that the Willimantic railroad depot was not a suitable place to conduct a public meeting, and that not enough people would have the chance to view the president, so it was arranged that Roosevelt's train should stop at the Bridge Street crossing, for a carriage to pick the president up there, and then drive him down Main Street to Lincoln Square, at the junction of Main and Union, where the maximum amount of people would be able to view Roo-

sevelt.

Once in Lincoln Square, the president would be able to make a public address to the large crowd assembled there.

Willimantic Mayor D. C. Barrows appointed a council of six citizens, three from each political party, to make suitable arrangements for the president's reception. The reception council also arranged for Main

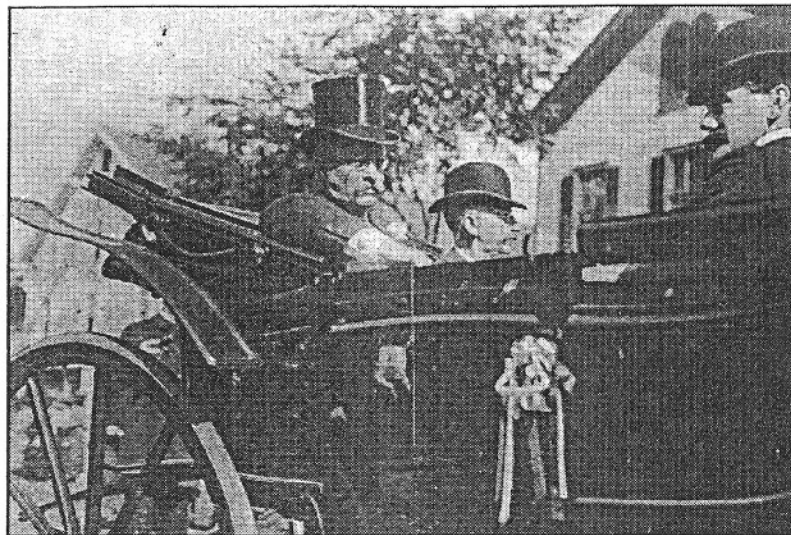
Street to be suitably decorated for Teddy's carriage drive along its length, and to ensure that that the route would be completely free of "teams," the pre-automobile term for horse-drawn transport.

This would be the responsibility of chief-of-police Capt. Richmond, who instructed the city's entire police force to be on duty for the big day.

The local militia of the Connecticut National Guard, based at the Center Street armory, would also patrol the streets on the lookout for troublemakers or would be assassins.

Continued next week

If you enjoy these historical



President Theodore Roosevelt, left, observes the crowds on Main Street in Willimantic during an Aug. 23, 1902 visit to the city. Next to the president is Willimantic Mayor D.C. Barry; opposite is Roosevelt's secretary George B. Courtelyou.

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