

History

An historic first: The president comes to town

Part two of four

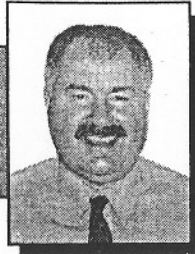
The big day was approaching. This was the first time ever that a sitting president had visited Windham.

Detailed plans had taken place, and it was arranged that the president's carriage would head a procession of nine carriages containing local dignitaries and the president's traveling entourage, made up mainly of media people from the newspapers, magazines and telegraph companies.

A local liveryman, Merrill H. Jones, supplied his best carriage and four white horses for the president's carriage, and a local florist, J.L. Leonard, supplied "buotonnieres" from his hothouses for the entire presidential party.

Furthermore, the local schools, parochial, public and private, arranged for a choir of children to stand on the town hall lawn to sing a patriotic song as the presidential carriages traveled up Bridge Street to Main, and passed the town hall. A canon salute from the top of Hosmer Mountain was abandoned in case it alarmed the horses; and the presidential bodyguard.

Two days before the big day, Willimantic was delighted to dis-



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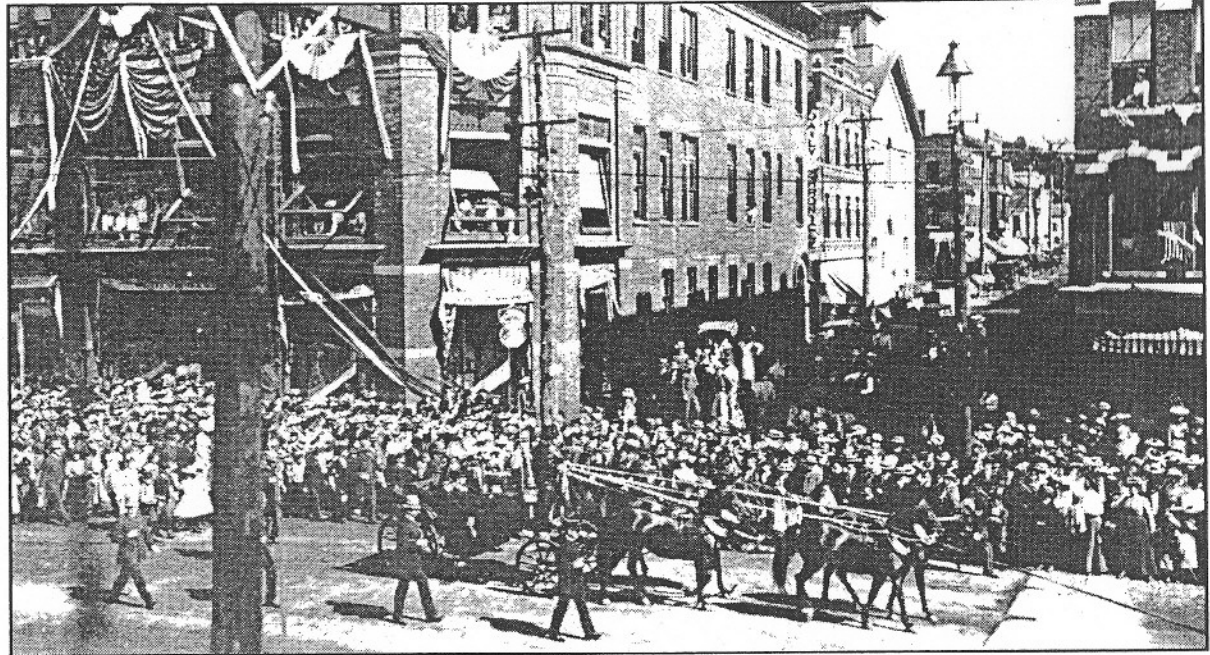
cover that the president's schedule allowed him to spend an extra 10 minutes in the city. Mayor Barrows and Frank Fenton were elected to ride in the president's carriage, along with Theodore Roosevelt and his secretary George Courtelyou.

The carriage would be accompanied by 10 policemen, five marching at each side. Forty members of Company E of the Connecticut National Guard were organized to lead the carriage.

They were dressed in blue uniforms with white gloves, and would encircle the carriage once it stopped at the head of Church Street, for the president to address the crowds.

The days leading up to the visit were spent in decorating Main Street.

No one could recall so many flags, bunting and banners. The



President Roosevelt's carriage approaches Lincoln Square.

flags were donated by W.C. Norris, the manager of the region's Grand Union Tea Co. stores.

The big day arrived, and at 8:30 a.m. on a beautiful summer's morning on Aug. 23, 1902, the city's dignitaries climbed into the 10 carriages, decorated with yellow asters, that were assembled in front of the Murray Block, and

the entourage rode down Main Street to the Bridge Street crossing, where a massive crowd had assembled.

A train passed over the crossing en route from Willington to Watch Hill, and to the crowd's delight a band was aboard playing rousing Sousa marches.

Just before 9 a.m. the police

cleared the crowds from Bridge Street and roped it off, before they allowed the horses and carriages to be taken adjacent to the railroad tracks.

The president would be in the city in a matter of minutes.

Continued next week

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