

History

An able financier moves into Zion's Hill mansion

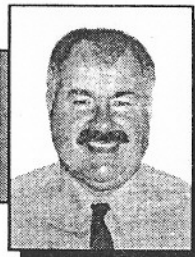
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The fine mansion on Zion's Hill, Windham, built by Eleazer Fitch in 1763, was occupied by some outstanding figures in Connecticut and American history, including Judge Zephaniah Swift and Alfred Avery Burnham.

George S. Moulton, who made a fortune from the immense popularity of Willimantic cotton thread, purchased the house in 1869.

After the Civil War, Moulton's health began to subside. He returned to Windham and purchased the Fitch mansion from Alfred A. Burnham. Moulton lived in the house for the next 13 years, and became deeply involved in Windham politics.

He died prematurely of diabetes at age 53 in April 1882. His obituary was most praiseworthy; "Few men live whose obituary, when truthfully written, will contain little else but praise, but the pages of this man's history are radiant with noble deeds and married with blemishes few



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indeed ... His ample fortune allowed him to take all the pleasure out of life that his disposition would permit, and his amiable ways in social intercourse made him universally beloved."

George S. Moulton's expansive wealth allowed him to dabble in politics. He represented Windham in the General Assembly in 1871 and served the 14th District two terms in the Senate in 1877 and 1878.

In 1876 he was a candidate for presidential elector. He had been a director in the Willimantic Linen Co., the National Shoe and Leather Bank, New York and New England Railroad, New

York and Boston Air Line Railroad and the Willimantic Savings Institute, and had been president of the Willimantic Trust Co.

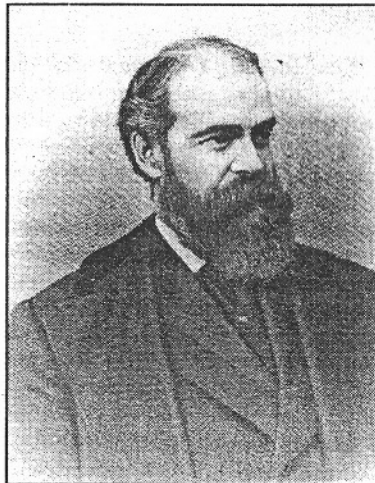
Moulton was "regarded as a very able financier and his reverses had been very few compared with his extensive dealings."

Moulton's funeral ceremony took place at the house on Zion's Hill, and was attended "by a large concourse of people, among them his warm personal friends from New York, Boston, Hartford and other places."

Moulton was buried in the Windham Cemetery.

Ownership of the Fitch mansion at the end of the 19th century is unclear. Dennis Shea, an Irish-American businessman who operated several saloons in Willimantic, briefly owned the house, and in the early years of the 20th century it was used as a summer vacation home for visiting New Yorkers, escaping the city heat.

The house was rented then pur-



George S. Moulton

chased from William Higgenson of New York City sometime around 1918 by George Rood, a member of an old Windham family.

In the tragic fire that destroyed the house in 1923, *the Willimantic Chronicle* referred to the property as the "Colonel Moulton

place, a handsome residence of the Colonial type."

It was noted that many alterations had been made to the interior of the house since its construction during the revolutionary days. The old Fitch mansion was particularly distinctive for its elegant staircase and hardwood floors.

The property on Zion's Hill in Windham is still in the Rood family. James Rood built a new house on the historic Zion's Hill property in the late 1980s.

The entire property now encompasses some 40 acres of land, and James Rood and his wife Betty Lou live in the new property. The foundations of the 1763 Fitch mansion can still be detected.

It's sadly no longer there, but without a doubt, the Fitch mansion was probably the most historic house of historic Windham.

Log onto threadcity.com to discover more about the town of Windham's rich heritage.

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