

## History

# Victorian home tour and street names

The third annual Victorian Willimantic Home Tour commences June 2 and 3.

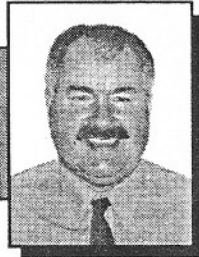
Visitors and locals will have the opportunity to visit 10 of Willimantic's best Victorian houses.

The hosts are Eastern Connecticut State University (Grant House at Prospect Street and High); Winnie and Bruce Hinckley (122 Windham St.); Richard Bloomer (272 Prospect St.); Alberta and Brian Riley (142 Prospect St.); Nancy and Ron Ouellette (214 Church St.).

Others include; Leslie O'Brien (125 Summit St.); Diane V. Hinman-Guggolz and Jason Guggolz (204 Summit St.); Annie and Frank Cronin (159 North St.); Donna and Bruce Young (210 Lewiston Ave.), and Judy and Doug Murphy (90 Windham St.).

The majority of these outstanding examples of Victorian architecture were built after the Civil War on the borough's expanding "hill district," particularly along Prospect and Summit Streets.

But how did Willimantic originally name its streets? Street names usually originate from geographical features, descriptive names, or builders' whims. Most of the streets in Willimantic



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follow those trends. High Street was the first thoroughfare built northward from Main in the 1830s, and was named by Robert W. Hooper (1817-1906), a real estate developer who invested in inexpensive land in that area shortly after the first cotton mills were being built along the Willimantic River.

Hooper made a fortune by patenting a method for placing a protective glaze on cotton thread. His nephew, Willimantic-born William B. Hooper (1840-1870), won the Congressional Medal of Honor in 1865, as a member of New Jersey's First Cavalry.

Wilson Street was originally known as Hooper's Lane, as both Robert and his brother John (William's father) built houses close to the Windham Manufacturing Co.'s cotton mills.

Prospect Street provides a fine

prospect of the Willimantic River Valley.

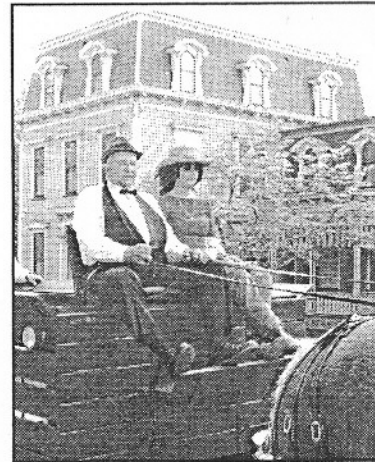
Summit Street is located on the top of the hill. North Street was the second street built northwards from Main. Turner Street was named for Thomas Turner (1819-1882), an Englishman who opened one of Willimantic's first dry good stores on the corner of Main and Church in 1859.

Church Street was named for the Methodist Church, built in that location in the 1840s and demolished in 1974.

Jackson Street was named for Lyman Jackson, an African-American farmer who owned the land upon which the street was built. Valley Street is in the base of the Willimantic River Valley, and Spring Street is built upon a number of freshwater springs.

Lewiston Avenue was named for Joseph A. Lewis (1829-1900), a market gardener whose greenhouses were located where the Avenue was laid.

Hewitt Street was named for Eli Hewitt (1815-1887), a substantial landowner who sold off his hill properties for house lots in the early 1880s. There is a beautiful view of the Willimantic River valley from the section of



Horse-drawn wagons were a feature of last year's event.

the hill occupied by Belle Vue Street.

Ash, Walnut, Linden, Beech, Birch, Maple, Pine, Spruce, Chestnut and Oak Streets are descriptive. Ives Street was named for Lawson Ives, one of the founders of the Willimantic Linen Co. in 1854.

Union Street was named for the saving of the Union after the Civil War. Bank Street was named for the Willimantic Savings Institute's new bank building on Main, built in 1869.

Watson and Tingley Streets were named for Robert Watson and Arunah Tingley of Rhode Island, the founders of the Windham Manufacturing Co. in 1824.

Milk Street was the thoroughfare where Mansfield farmers transported milk to the Jillson mills before the Civil War.

The land where Peru Street, Lima Street and Bolivia Street are located was originally named "the South American lot" by the landowner, a lady who enjoyed touring South America in the 1890s.

Over the river, Whiting and Hayden Street was named for Whiting Hayden (1808-1886) the owner of the Smithville cotton mills on the eastern side of Bridge Street. Willard Street was named for his grandson.

One of the continuing mysteries of Willimantic street names is Ivanhill Street. Does anyone know how it was named?

Next Week: An article featuring one of the hill district's best-kept secrets, 159 North St.

Log onto [www.threadcity.com](http://www.threadcity.com) to discover more facts about Willimantic's rich history.

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