

— HISTORY —

Charismatic, fiery manager Danny Dunn

Part two of seven

Between 1901 and 1906, many exciting games were witnessed at the Windham Field baseball stadium. The Willimantic Colts, and their charismatic and fiery Irish manager Danny Dunn, were feared and respected across Connecticut.

Dunn's colorful presence on fields around the state, urging on the Colts, certainly assisted his forthcoming political career. Dunn had managed the team in the latter half of the 1890s, taking over from the colorful Oscar Tanner, who also felt the political benefit of being the coach/manager of the Willimantic Colts when the team had competed in the Connecticut professional league in 1894.

Oscar O. Tanner (1858-1933) was born and educated in Willimantic. In 1880 he went to Boston and managed the Boyle Brothers Department Store. Tanner, a skilful boxer, athlete and baseball player, was a personal

friend of World Champion Heavyweight boxer, John L. Sullivan. Tanner returned to Willimantic in 1893 and organized the Willimantic Colts, and in 1898 he was elected Willimantic's first Democratic mayor, and served two terms, 1898-99 and 1904-05.

On April 2, 1902, the Willimantic Baseball and Athletic Association held a heated annual meeting, and after much discussion it was voted to invest manager Dunn with full power to hire players for the coming season. The directors had already signed up five players for the season, but it was now solely left to Dunn to choose the rest of the squad, "at any terms he sees fit to make."

Director Thomas Kelley thought that this gave Dunn too much



Tom Beardsley

power.

The grounds committee reported that Windham Field had been leveled and filled with ashes and covered with loam.

The stadium's fence was also raised, because many spectators had climbed the old fence and had watched the games free of charge. New uniforms were selected and ordered.

They were pearl gray and trimmed with black with black belts and stockings, with "WILLIMANTIC," written in black letters across their chests.

The WBAA secured rooms in the Sadd building (760-762 Main St.), where all the playing equipment, balls, bats and uniforms were stored.

An arrangement was made with the YMCA, which allowed the players from both competing clubs the use of their changing and showering facilities, also located in the Sadd building. The players therefore had a relatively lengthy walk to and from

Windham Field before and after the games, and it was decided to hire a charabanc to drive them up Main Street. These journeys to the stadium became a ritual, and the charabanc was often trailed by hundreds of fans.

In July 1902, the Colts were offered a large purse to play in Woonsocket, R.I., in a challenge match.

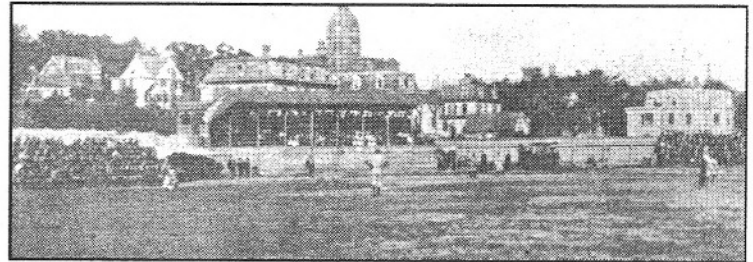
The Colts had built an impressive reputation, and a large crowd assembled at Woonsocket's Clinton Oval stadium. The Woonsocket newspaper com-

mented that the Colts "made the best appearance of any team to appear at the Oval." It was noted that their uniforms were "clean, natty and neat."

The Colts' teamwork was "perfect," and they performed double plays "as easy as throwing shuttles in a loom."

The Colts lost 3-2, but left a favorable impression, and it was hoped they would soon be invited back to Woonsocket.

Continued next week



The Willimantic Colts' baseball stadium, Windham Field, is pictured for the opening game of the 1902 baseball season.

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