

— HISTORY —

A new manager brings in some imports from Boston

Part six of seven

The local newspapers keenly anticipated the 1906 baseball season: "There is no question that baseball is a good thing for the city in a business way, the contests at Windham Field keeping our own people in town on Saturday afternoons and holidays and drawing many people here from surrounding towns, and a good team here advertises Willimantic throughout the state giving it the name of being a live, wide awake town. Just think how it would be here Saturday afternoons this summer without baseball. Look at it, too, from the standpoint of local patriotism and help the cause along if you are financially able to do so."

The Willimantic Baseball and Athletic Association's board of directors in 1906 consisted of George Bartlett (president), the president and treasurer of the *Willimantic Chronicle*, Dwight Lyman (vice president), an insurance agent and the town's probation officer, Thomas J. Kelley, (secretary), a local attorney, Michael Sullivan, the superintendent of the Willimantic office of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co., Arthur E. Stiles, a clerk in Stiles and Harrington's

wholesale grocery, Albert Colgrove, a reporter at the *Chronicle*, and Arthur McQuillan, a saloon owner.

The board offered the job of team manager to Danny Dunn, but Dunn had been elected mayor of Willimantic in November 1905, and declined because of pressure of work, despite his great love for the game. A player-manager, John J. 'Shawn' Sullivan, was appointed.

Games were arranged with Waterbury Consolidated and the Meriden Dublins, before the Big Four competition got under way. "The grounds are being repaired and put into good condition. The diamond is being treated to a top dressing of loam, which will be rolled, and the holes are being filled up and the loose stones removed. The grandstand and bleachers are also being repaired. The new uniforms will arrive here in time for the game on Saturday, May 26."

Sullivan hired six players from the Boston area. They arrived in



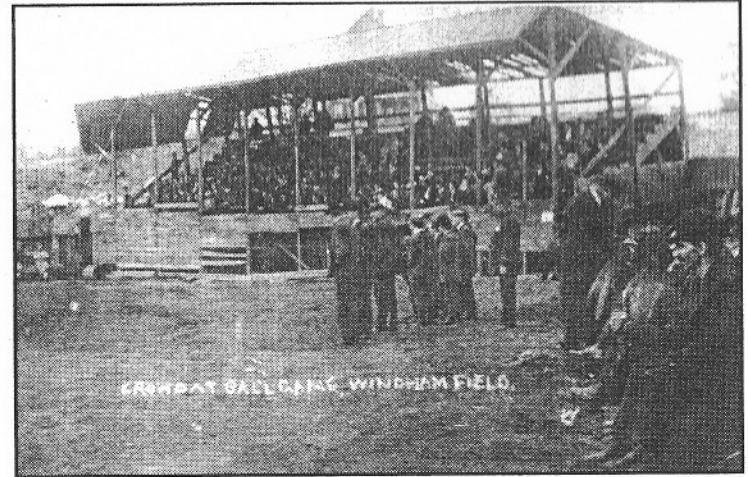
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Willimantic on the Boston express on May 24. The local newspaper reported that "when the bunch of bean eaters fell in line to march up the street the baseball cranks began to appear and at nearly every door and window a head or two popped out to have a look."

Their names were given as Doherty, McGorry, Goode, Lovett, Parks and Hendry. Doherty had played in the Maine state league with Belfast and in the Massachusetts league with Wellington. William McGorry had starred for Tufts College for four years and since graduating he had played for Brockton and a team in Florida. "This entire galaxy of stars will be on exhibition Saturday afternoon at Windham Field."

The following day, the new Colts team got in some practice on Windham Field, but they were confined to the outfield as the club had hired the town's steam road roller that day to flatten down the diamond.

A crowd of 3,000 filled the grandstand and bleachers to watch Mayor Dunn throw the season's first ball in the game with Waterbury, and to watch the new players in action. They performed



The grandstand at Windham Field took on a dilapidated look at the 1906 season got under way.

well and won 8-5, but events rapidly declined during the forthcoming weeks. George Bartlett, the Colts' president, aware of the club's dire financial straits, tendered his resignation before the Big Four contest got underway. The other directors urged him to stay in office, claiming that the rumors of financial hardship were false.

On June 11, the Bristol club announced it was bankrupt and dropped out of the Big Four. Their main backers, the Bristol &

Plainville Tramway Co., withdrew their funds when Bristol decided to play their home matches on a field well away from the trolley car route. Two days later the three remaining clubs abandoned the idea of a league, and the Big Four was dissolved. Nevertheless, a series of games was arranged between Willimantic, Rockville, Manchester and a new reconstituted Bristol nine.

Continued next week

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