

— HISTORY —

Fifth annual Victorian House Tour should be outstanding

Next Saturday the fifth annual Willimantic Victorian House Tour gets under way, and will feature some of the Northeast's finest examples of Victorian domestic architecture.

There will also be other attractions, including tours of the Willimantic Cemetery and Windham Mills. Come and join me May 31 at 10:30 a.m. and at noon at the cemetery gates opposite the Super Stop & Shop gas station, and on June 1 at 10:30 a.m. and at noon at the Windham Mills complex. But of course, the Victorian houses are the main attractions of the weekend.

Among the Victorian houses on display are five that are appearing for the first time. They are the 1869 Keigwin House at 154 Pleasant St., the 1888 Little House at 232 North St., the 1895 Scripture House at 114 Windham St., the 1901 Bugbee House at 76 Bellevue St. and the 1927 Ladd House at 30 Potter St. This week we'll take a look at the builder of the Bugbee House, and next week at the Keigwin House, which is more widely known as the Card Home.

Edwin Francis Bugbee (1868-

1942) was the builder and first occupant of 76 Bellevue St. He was more commonly known as E.

Frank Bugbee, and was born in Willimantic in 1868, the son of Edwin and Sarah Bugbee.

E. Frank Bugbee's father, Edwin Bugbee (1825-1913), was one of Willimantic's wealthiest and best-known residents, and in 1872 built one of Willimantic's earliest Victorian mansions at 97 Prospect St. He was born into a substantial Ashford family, and in 1852 he headed to Boston and established an industry that manufactured arctic overshoes for the whaling industry. However, Bugbee lost a fortune during the financial crash of 1857, but recovered his losses thanks to some profitable investments in northern Illinois land.

In 1868 he came back east, settled in Willimantic and went into partnership with William D. Grant and Ansel Arnold. The trio purchased property on the corner of



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Jackson and Valley streets, and established a profitable grain and lumber distributing business. Edwin Bugbee retired in 1891, and led a leisurely, philanthropic life. For example in 1912 he funded the construction of the YMCA building on Main Street.

E. Frank Bugbee was born into this family of wealth and privilege. After attending the Williston seminary in Massachusetts he enrolled at Yale where he studied law. Bugbee graduated in 1890, and went into partnership with Willimantic attorney John L. Hunter.

When Bugbee returned to Willimantic from Yale, he lived with his parents in their spacious mansion at 97 Prospect St. However, shortly after his first marriage, Bugbee built a house on Bellevue Street. He purchased the plot on May 20, 1900, and by 1902 the Bugbees were living in the new house numbered at 76 Bellevue St., indicating that the house was most likely built in 1901. At this time, Bugbee was the prosecuting attorney at the Willimantic police courts. He left this position after being elected to the state house of representatives where he served on the banking

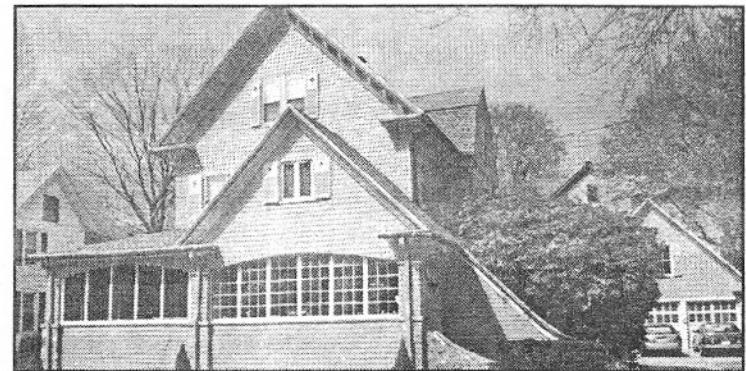
committee. After his term was over Bugbee resumed the practise of law. In 1920 he became the Willimantic Trust Co.'s attorney, and in 1926 was appointed the company's president.

Bugbee was widely involved in civic associations, being an active member of the Elks, Knights of Pythias, Masons, the Congregational Church, the YMCA, the Willimantic Rotary Club, the Willimantic Country Club and the College Arms Golf Club of Deland, Fla., where he spent the winters.

But his major involvement was in the Windham Community Memorial Hospital. He was its

first president, and made generous contributions to get it built.

Bugbee died in May 1942 and left public bequests amounting to \$400,000. Windham Hospital was the largest benefactor, receiving \$150,000 in addition to another \$100,000 of a \$200,000 trust fund, the income from which was payable to his widow during her life time. On her death the hospital was to receive one half of the trust fund, the Willimantic Congregational Church a quarter, and the YMCA a quarter. Bugbee also left \$10,000 for the First Baptist Church in memory of his mother, Sarah Preston Bugbee.



The Bugbee House at 76 Bellevue St.

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