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# The prominent Lincoln family

*Part two of two*

For more than a century, Willimantic's Lincoln Square provided a junction between Union Street and Lower Main Street. It disappeared in 1974 when the east end of the city was redeveloped. The square was named for John C. Lincoln (1851-1925), who established a furniture store in the triangle building built by his father-in-law, George W. Burnham, in 1862. The Lincoln Block was demolished during the

1950s, but the gas station which stood on its location, still provided a communal urban space, which was used to c o m m e n c e many parades or marches.

John C. Lincoln was born in North Windham in 1851. His father Mason



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Lincoln (1816-89) sent his son to be educated at the prestigious Natchaug High School in Willimantic. Mason left his farms in North Windham and Chaplin and established a brokerage and real estate business in the borough. However, his younger brother and John C. Lincoln's uncle, Allen Lincoln (1819-82), are credited with being the architect and builder of Willimantic's east end.

As a young man, Allen Lincoln took advantage of the family's sheep farms and woolen manufacturing business and went out west to sell the family's woolen goods. He returned to North Windham in 1852 and the following year established a general store in neighboring Chaplin. In 1859 he purchased the stone building, still extant, at the junction of Main and Bridge streets and established a grocery store.

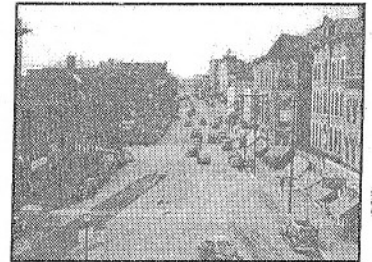
Lincoln saw the potential of Willimantic and shortly afterwards purchased several hundred acres of land which he developed into Valley Street, Union Street, Temple Street, Center Street, Jackson Street, Maple Avenue, and Turner Street. In 1869 he purchased further tracts of land on Prospect Hill, and opened up Prospect Street for development.

Lincoln was Windham's selectman, town clerk and treasurer for 17 years and one of the commissioners to establish and install Willimantic's first waterworks for fire protection. He was a director of the Willimantic Savings Institute and for a time, was president of the Willimantic Trust Co. He was originally a Democrat, but in 1856 voted the Free Soil ticket and joined the Republican Party at its organization. A Congregationalist, Lincoln served the society of which he was a member in various offices and was active in the movement that

resulted in the new church building at Willimantic in 1870. Allen Lincoln's son and John C. Lincoln's cousin, Allen Bennett Lincoln (1858-1927), is the author of the "History of Windham County" (1920).

Allen Lincoln's cousin, John C. Lincoln, established a furniture store in the building that overlooked Lincoln Square. In 1920 his cousin Allen Lincoln noted that John had been in business for almost 45 years and that his building was four stories high and measured 130 by 24 feet.

"He carries a large and carefully selected line of furniture of attractive design and his stock, together with his honourable dealings and earnest desire to please his patrons, is one of the strong elements in his growing trade." When Lincoln Square disappeared in the early 1970s, so did the name of the family that had done so much to develop Willimantic in the years after the Civil War.



A view of Lincoln Square and Main Street from atop the Lincoln Block during the late 1940s.

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