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ELLIOT FAMILY WAS A DYNASTY IN TOWN

Part One of Two

George E. Elliot (1806-67), his son George C. Elliot (1845-1903) and his grandson George S. Elliot (1867-1941) represent a century-long business dynasty which grew as Willimantic grew. The family was involved in tailoring, shoe, bicycle and carriage retailing, and insurance agencies continually between 1845 and 1941.

George E. Elliot was born at Trowbridge, Wiltshire, in south-



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east England in 1806. He trained as a tailor in London and in 1836 immigrated to the United States with his wife and two daughters. They traveled on a sailing vessel, and

the journey took to New York six weeks. The Elliot family first settled in Cromwell, where Elliot was hired by a local tailor. He then moved to Middle Haddam, where his son George Chauncey Elliot was born in 1838. In 1845 the Elliots came to Willimantic, and the elder Elliot established the borough's first tailoring business. He opened a store opposite Bank Street on Main, on the site of the recently demolished Chapman Block.

Elliot sent his son, George Chauncey, to be educated at South Windham's prestigious Fitch Academy, also known as the Pine Grove Seminary.

He walked there daily from his parents' home in Willimantic, and upon graduating in 1854 Elliot accepted a clerkship at a Providence clothing store, the wholesale cloak and tailors' trimmings establishment of Warner, Scott & Hathaway. In 1857, he returned to Willimantic and established a boot and shoe retailing establishment in his father's tailor store.

In 1862, an ad in the Willimantic Journal noted that Elliot kept "a fine assortment of boots and shoes of the latest and most fashionable styles, which he will exchange for shimplasters, and postage stamps." A "shimplaster" was a slang term for a bank note depreciated in value, and usually worth less than a dollar. Elliot's father died in 1867, and he added his father's tailoring business to the shoe store.

The business prospered, and in 1865-66 he built the Elliott block opposite the entrance to North Street, and transferred his shoe shop there. He hung a large golden boot in front of the building, which became a Willimantic landmark for many years. After his father's death in 1867, he incorporated his tailoring business in the store. It was here that George C. Elliot's son, George Storrs Elliot, was born on May 20, 1867.

After George C. Elliot's business block opposite North Street burned down in 1885, he retired from active business and invested in the Gorry Iron Foundry, which was located on the southeast corner of the junction of Valley Street and Mansfield Avenue. He also became a major stockholder in the Willimantic Trust Co., the Natchaug Silk Co., located on North Street, and the National Thread Co. at Mansfield Hollow.

George S. Elliott, graduated from Willimantic's Natchaug High School in 1884 and studied in a business college at Hartford. On returning to Willimantic he was hired by the Hillhouse & Taylor and the Lincoln & Boss lumberyards. In 1894, Elliot entered into partnership with E.P. Chesboro and sold bicycles, carriages, wagons, coal and wood. In 1895, Elliot and Chesboro took advantage of the bicycling craze and sold more than 5,000 bicycles.

Concludes next week



The Pine Grove Seminary in South Windham educated the sons of Windham's elites during the mid-19th century. George Chauncey Elliot was educated there from 1852 to 1854.