

October 20, 2005

Window on Willimantic

Part three of
three

The window on Willimantic in 1931 provided by the mayor's city report has provided us with a view of health concerns, the problems caused by unemployment, the state of the city's streets and the sterling work conducted by the city's police force. This third and final section provides a view supplied by the city fire chief.



Tom
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With these statistics recorded, Reynolds reported on the make up and condition of his equipment. He and his men were able to call upon a 75-foot Mack aerial truck with 292-feet of ladders, a 750-gallon Mack pumping engine with a 100-gallon booster tank, a Reo chemical and hose truck, a Ruggles chemical and hose truck, a 750 gallon American LaFrance pumping engine with a 40-gallon chemical tank, 6,900 feet of 2.5-inch hose and 500 feet of 1.5-inch hose.

Reynolds boasted that all his equipment was in tip-top condition and that in the past year the two fire trucks had had their engines reconditioned.

However, he reported that his Mack pumping engine often broke down. There was not enough in the budget to replace it, but Reynolds thanked the mayor for the 500 feet of 1½-inch hose the department had received from the city in the past year. The new hose delivered water at lower pressures, cut down on water damage and was easier to handle.

Reynolds also acted as fire marshal and he reported the issuing of 119 building permits, 63 for new buildings and 56 for additions and alterations.

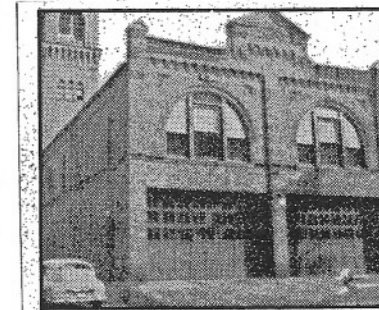
New construction included 28 automobile garages, 18 houses, 13 chicken houses, three filling stations, a hospital, plus additions to Windham High School and the Willimantic Silk Co.'s mill on Bridge Street.

The fire alarm system, consisting of signal boxes located around the city, was also Reynolds' responsibility and he tested and checked the system monthly and had installed new

boxes at Carey and Jackson streets (No. 53), Birch and Valley streets (No. 152) and at Pleasant and Card streets (No. 231). As far as the fire chief was concerned, the state of the Bank Street fire house was a far greater problem than leaking pumps and faulty alarm boxes. A year earlier he had reported cracks in the brickwork and now he believed that the department had outgrown the 50-year-old building.

Heating the ancient structure was also a problem and the last winter he had used 55 tons of coal for the purpose. Reynolds stressed the necessity of a modern three-door structure. Moreover, the Summit and Jackson street firehouses were unsuitable for fire department purposes and he recommended that they be disposed of. Reynolds also called for the city to instigate national electrical code rules to prevent amateurs from doing electrical wiring in a "haphazard manner." He also recommended that the mayor hire two more men to allow for a more thorough building inspection program to prevent fires.

Reynolds then turned his attention to the "over the river" section of the town and believed that the Fourth Ward's rapid growth called for a small station there because of potential hold ups at the railroad crossings.



The Bank Street firehouse

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