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The 'Treasures' of Willimantic and its surrounding community

Part two of two

In 1977, the *Chronicle* celebrated its 100th anniversary by publishing a special 80-page supplement named "Treasures," which highlighted the rich history and culture of those towns in which the newspaper circulated.

Many of the *Chronicle* staff writers who contributed to the anniversary magazine have gone on to forge writing careers elsewhere, such as present day syndicated Libertarian writer Vin Suprynowicz. He contributed an article that featured the then-weekly Friday night horse auction at Hebron. Suprynowicz described it as "a treasure chest of Americana," where attendees were mainly "grizzled oldsters," horsemen with sideburns, in hats, toboggan caps and broad breasted hunting jackets.

This catalog of 1977 local treasures included equally colorful people from each local town. It featured 109-year-old Henry Mannah, Mansfield's oldest citizen. He had voted in 22 presidential elections and recalled the 1838 blizzard. Franklin had Frank Nasin, who was renowned across the region for his turkey farm. Nasin bred, fed, cleaned, stuffed and cooked around 2,500 turkeys a year on his farm on Route 207.

Scotland had the Bass family, and a 266-year-old family farm.

Robert Weisman, today a technology writer for the Boston Globe, visited the Bass farm, noting that it dated back to 1710. At the time four brothers, Stephen, William, David and John, and their wives, ran the farm. They maintained a herd of 1,000 Holsteins and 420 mulch cows. The Bass farm's 1,100 acres were spread across Scotland,



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Lebanon and Windham.

Writer Janice Gould continued with an agricultural theme by taking a trip to Eastford where she interviewed Albert Buell, an internationally known horticulturalist who bred hybrid and highly colorful gloxinias, a cousin of the beautiful African violet flower. Buell noted that members of New York City's famed DuPont family once arrived in a chauffeur-driven limousine to buy his hybrids.

The publication's focus on people continued with pieces on Hebron's John Sibun, a transplanted Englishman, who had written a bicentennial history of the town and a vignette on

Lebanon's Henry Aspinall, the deacon of the First Baptist Church, tax collector and school bus driver.

The supplement's focus on people was integrated with a look at those special places in the region, places such as the Paul Urda farm at the corner of Westford Hill Road and Route 89, Lebanon's 1732 Wadsworth stable that had once quartered George Washington's horse when it was located in Hartford. "Treasures" also featured the Mansfield Hol-

low Dam, Hebron's Prophet Rock, Franklin's Ayer Mountain, Devil's Den and Roaring Oven.

As ever, such a publication includes advertisements that recall the region's rich industrial commercial past, as well as its cultural and historic heritage as outlined by the magazine's contributors.

Well-known companies and businesses that have now disappeared such as Kendall, the Willimantic Trust Co., Furniture Fair, General Lyon's Inn, William

J. Sweeney and Sons, Hurley's, American Thread Co., Clark's Restaurant, the Elm Supermarket and the Shell Chateau took out large advertising spreads.

The 1977 publication, "Treasures" provides yet one more great resource for future historians who will be researching the region's rich history. Lucy Crosbie conceived "Treasures" and Daryl Perch edited, compiled and designed it. The publication also included Harold Hanka's fine photographs.



Elm Supermarket's 1977 staff is featured in 'Treasures.' Left to right: Joey Haddad, Mark Fasicot, Paul Roy, Sharon Roy, Linda Cichon, Susan Cichon, Patty Ann Roy, Leo Bergeron and John Rajchel.

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