

The story behind the Jordan Block

The man who gave his name to a landmark business block in Willimantic died on Dec. 6, 1925, at age 60. Fred D. Jordan was typically representative of the children of elite families from contiguous rural towns who came to the booming 19th century borough and invested their inheritances in entrepreneurial



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efforts.

Jordan was born on his father's farm in Lebanon in February 1865. His parents, Peter and Philipena (Page) Jordan, were among Lebanon's leading citizens and in 1879 they sent their son to Willimantic's prestigious Natchaug High School. From there, he completed a business course in a New Jersey college before returning to Lebanon where he taught school for two years.

In 1886, Willimantic's leading dry goods store owners, Arthur Carpenter and Amos T. Fowler, hired Jordan, then 21, as their head clerk. Fowler, like Jordan, also came from a leading Lebanon family and was a good friend of Peter Jordan.

Born in the Goshen Society of Lebanon in 1825, Fowler was a direct descendent of English-born William Fowler, a Puritan Congregationalist minister who died in New Haven in 1661. Fowler's grandson settled in Goshen in 1702 and built a farmhouse in which five subsequent generations of Fowlers were born, including Amos Tertius Fowler, so named because he was the third Amos Fowler born in the same Goshen home.

In 1889, Jordan went into partnership with Arthur Carpenter in a hardware business. Carpenter died shortly afterwards, so Jordan invited his elder brother, William P. Jordan (1863-1953), to take his late partner's place. The new company took the name Jordan Brothers and in 1906, it relocated to the Tilden Block, just east of the footbridge then under construction.

A decade later, a raging fire destroyed the block at 664-678 Main St. Undeterred, the Jordans planned to build a grand new modern business block over the ruins and dynamited the Tilden Block's charred remains. However, disaster struck during the dynamiting. Several hundred people stood on the footbridge to watch the explosive demolition. The flying debris injured 20 and killed one of the spectators.

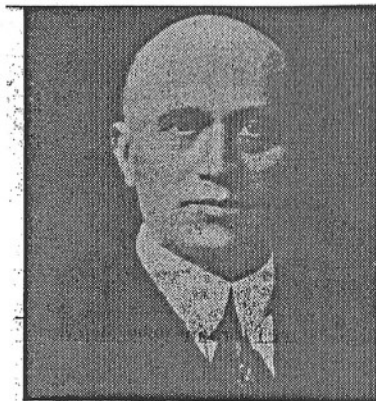
In 1925, the Jordans sold their prosperous hardware business located in the new Jordan Block to A. Linn Weatherfield, Nelson A. Daniels and William R. King and focused their attention on the Jordan Auto Co., which they had established in 1919.

They built a new showroom, garage and workshops on the western junction of Main and Walnut streets that later became the home of the original Lucky Strike Lanes bowling alley. Jordan's many business interests in the Thread City were wide and varied. Besides being the president of the Jordan Auto Co., he

was also president of the Willimantic Trust Co. Many will recall that this bank occupied part of the new Jordan Block.

Jordan was also president of the Rockville-Willimantic Lighting Co., trustee for the Connecticut State Hospital in Middletown, vice president of the Windham Silk Co. and president of the Willimantic Chamber of Commerce and the YMCA.

Jordan lived in style at 190 North St. He died there after a long illness in 1925. His wife, Nettie Brewster Jordan, and three children, Roland, Walter and Myrtle, survived him, along with his two brothers, William P. Jordan of Willimantic and Charles Jordan of Lebanon and a sister, Mrs. Thomas J. Little of Willimantic. His brother and business partner William died at age 90, in 1953.



Fred Jordan, pictured in 1919.

MARCH 16, 2006