

December 19, 1992

THAT WAS THE WEEK THAT WAS

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF LOCAL NEWS
ITEMS FOR 1892, 1917, 1942 AND 1967

1892

The grand opening was announced of the Connecticut Institute of the New England Houston Narcotic Cure Company, located in the Obwebetuck Inn at South Windham. Several patients were already in residence at this "dry-out" hospital for alcoholics and drug addicts. It was managed by E.L. Palmer of Danielsonville, and Columbia's Dr. Waller was the resident physician. The treatment administered at the company was perfected by a Dr. Houston, and this was his 21st such institute in the United States.

The treatments consisted of tonics taken orally and injected into the bloodstream which turned the most powerful appetite for liquor into a loss of all desire. The cure was guaranteed to be permanent, if certain guidelines were followed.

Eugene Boss, O.H.K. Risley, J. Griffin Martin and Judge John Hall, all prominent citizens of Willimantic, served notice to the selectmen of the town of Windham that they were planing to petition the next General Assembly for a charter for an electric railroad beginning at the north end of Main Street in South Coventry and ending in Willimantic, where branch lines would be constructed to Mansfield center, Windham, Baltic and various streets in Willimantic.

The bad condition of Willimantic's streets provided a harvest for the town's horse shoers. Most of the streets were bare ground, covered with ice, where smooth shod horses quickly came to grief. The city thoroughfares became the scene of numerous accidents, where out-of-control teams and carriages crashed into each. Pedestrians also hit the ground regularly on the even icier sidewalks which remained frozen solid in the shade of the buildings.

1917

Samuel Johnson, manager of the Loomer Opera House, revealed that there would be no more vaudeville shows at the theater until the war was over. It was thought that most of the entertainers were in the forces, but the agents for the country's traveling show-people admitted that many acts were disbanding because most theaters around the country now preferred to show moving pictures. What was the world coming too?

The Max Pollack Company had manufactured cotton thread in the old Conantville silk mill on the site today occupied by the East Brook Mill, since 1900. Owner and manager Herman Johl closed down operations at 11 am on December 17, and treated his 83

employees to a Christmas party. After patriotic speeches, the workers received cash bonuses, thrift stamps and war bonds. The amounts were distributed according to each worker's service. Johl also distributed wrapped presents for his employees' children, but kept the best news till last. As from January 8, 1918, each employee would receive a 10 per cent pay raise.

December, 1917 was one of the coldest Decembers ever experienced in Windham. Water pipes froze and burst as temperatures plummeted to - 18 degrees F. This was particularly worrying, as coal stocks were becoming alarmingly low because of the war effort. A number of Willimantic people suffered from severe frost bite to their noses and ears as they lined up for sugar -another rare commodity, outside the Chagnon and Bacon store.

1942

The Windham Community Memorial Hospital made plans to raise \$22,430 to purchase new X-ray equipment. The Hospital's current equipment had been purchased second hand in 1932, and needed updating. The machines were subjected to regular breakdowns. Despite those problems, the Hospital performed 2,089 X-ray examinations in 1941. Windham hospital's radiographic department was one of the few cancer clinics operated in voluntary hospitals across America, and the American College of Surgeons requested that their equipment be updated to maintain that status. It was hoped to raise the money through private subscriptions.

1967

The town of Coventry held its annual Christmas Carol Sing and lighting of the Christmas tree in front of the town building on route 31. Mary Pearce, the eldest daughter of Coventry First Selectman Michael Pierce, lit the tree. The choir singing was sponsored by the local board of Selectmen and the Coventry High School Music Department. The musical program consisted of selections performed by the local school Brass choir directed by Carl Salina. After the Sing, Santa Claus distributed candy to the children present.

Coventry Historical Society's home on South Street had just undergone outside refurbishment. The completion of the work was announced by Hilda Keller. The house's sills and underpins were replaced. Unsightly concrete was removed, and new clapboards were put on around the lower section of the house and painted in the same color as the rest of the building. The historical renovation work was carried out under the supervision of the late James Hazen of Granby, who had sadly passed a way only a few days after the work was complete. The Society sent a letter of appreciation to his widow.

The Yule shopping rush was in full swing in downtown Willimantic, and it looked as if 1967 would be a record breaking Christmas for local businesses. Opening hours were extended for one week until the 23rd of December, with stores staying open until 9 pm

every night. John Wrana, director of the Willimantic Chamber of Commerce urged shoppers to "Try Willimantic First." These were the days before the East Brook Mall, and Willimantic boasted five men's shops, two sporting goods stores, seven shoe stores, seven women's shops, six department stores, four hardware stores and a wide variety of eating places. Mayor Stanley Kokoska announced that all city parking was free until Christmas, and Police Chief Martin Viullermet added that traffic had been very heavy because of the extremely mild weather. He also announced that he was organizing extra patrols to help out-of-town shoppers find parking lots.