

JAN 18, 1992

THAT WAS THE WEEK THAT WAS

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

1892

The police and local newspapers warned the residents of Willimantic to guard their chickens as a spate of chicken stealing had hit town. Many area chicken coops had been raided by a well organized gang who had a speedy getaway horse and cart. They quickly disappeared from the scene when the evil deed was done!

Windham's recently formed bicentennial committee were distributing subscription blanks to businessmen who lived and worked around the Windhams. It was planned to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the founding of Windham(1692) during the forthcoming summer.

Windham Green pictured in 1892 during the bicentennial celebrations. Windham was founded in 1692.



The "trial of the century" in Willimantic came to an end when Judge Hall pronounced a sentence of life imprisonment upon Mary Daley (42) who had been found guilty of "murder in the second degree." The two week trial in Windham's old courthouse was keenly followed across the state and nation. Each day, the gallery was packed to listen to the expert witnesses lurid details of this heinous crime. Daley, a mother of three, had been charged with the murder of her son's friend, 18 year old James Corcorran. Daley had allegedly lured the young man to her tenement on Main Street, Willimantic, on the night of September 8, 1891, after a long session of heavy drinking. Witnesses explained how she had consumed large amounts of wine, whisky and lager. Corcorran's body was discovered in the tenement the following morning. He lay in a pool of blood, having died from a single stab wound to the throat, severing his jugular vein. The murder weapon was found to be a pair of tailoring shears belonging to Mary Daley. She denied the charge, but overwhelming evidence pointed to her as being the murderess.

1917.

A new dance pavilion had just been constructed at Wangumbaug Lake, one minutes walk from the trolley car terminus which linked Coventry with Willimantic. This was considered to be excellent news for Willimantic's young people who had regularly visited the old "Casino" dance pavilion in Coventry, which had succumbed to fire the previous summer. Lake Wangumbaug was often referred to in the early years of this century as "Willimantic's summer resort."

Recent extensive improvements to the Loomer Opera House were completed when it's old gas lamps were replaced by a modern electric lighting system. This theater was considered to be the grandest of all "east of Hartford."

Smoking was banned in the Windham Town Hall. The selectmen were fingered as the guilty parties, as they often threw down lighted cigars and cigarettes to the ground during town meetings. Several small fires had already been extinguished.

The first annual concert of the Natchaug Lodge of the Knights of Pythias was to be held in the Town Hall - if it hadn't burnt down! It was a resounding success with over 200 couples in attendance. It was held in order to raise funds for a new meeting hall. The old Lodge was destroyed in the Jordan Block fire the previous November.

1942

A local born soldier was stationed at Hickam Air Field in Hawaii during the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Henry Rothblat was the son of Mr. & Mrs. H. Rothblat who resided in Whiting Street. He had written to the *Chronicle* expressing his delight with a pile of letters from Willimantic people wishing him well. "It sure made me feel swell that they were thinking about me during the attack...it makes things a lot easier when you know your home town is backing us 100 per cent..."

Mrs. Shirley Cohen, also a resident of Whiting Street, Willimantic, was the local organizer of a nation wide drive to supply free books to all members of the armed forces. The "Victory Book Campaign" in Willimantic received a massive boost when the American Thread Company donated over 600 volumes from its recently closed Dunham Hall Library. The committee was housed in the town's YMCA buildings. Mrs. Cohen appealed for help to transport the books donated in Willimantic to the regional distribution center located in Storrs.

The city's Red Cross War Relief Campaign also received a boost when the Electro - Motive Company donated over \$100 to the cause. Attorney and Mrs. E. Frank Bugbee also donated a \$100 to take the total pass the \$3,000 mark and almost half way to Mayor Hinman's target of \$7,500.

1967.

A law was set into motion in the Connecticut State Legislature, designed to change the names of two colleges. The Willimantic State College would hereafter be known as Eastern Connecticut State University, and Danbury College would be known as Western Connecticut State University. This move paved the way for a program of extensive capital investment to expand both colleges. Students at Danbury were delighted. No longer would their college be identified with the correctional facility in the city!

H. Chester Nelson, the principal of Windham High School since 1952 announced his

retirement on his upcoming 70th birthday. Nelson was born in Rumford, Maine, in 1897. He was educated at Bowdoin (BA) and Columbia (MA), and served as a lieutenant in the Field Artillery during World War One. Nelson arrived at Windham High School in 1929 as a physics teacher. He was extremely proud of the fact that 25 of his Windham students had gone on to gain their Phds in physics.

The Cumberland Farm Store located at 1167 Main Street was held up by two masked men who had got away with over \$1,000 in cash. A passer-by, Thomas Harrington had heard the cries for help while passing the store at 11. 15 pm on the night of 15 January. The store clerk, John Zahansky, was unable to identify his assailants.