

June 20, 1992

THAT WAS THE WEEK THAT WAS

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

1892

A potentially disastrous railroad accident occurred at South Windham on the New London Northern Road. The 2. 50 pm freight train from New London was late, and did not arrive at the South Windham station until 3. 25 pm, the same time as a scheduled passenger train, heading south. The freight train stopped below the depot, and went onto a side track to let the passenger train pass. The engineer and head brakeman on the freight edged forward, under a flag, on the side line, but they the passenger train also took the side line, and both engines collided head on. The engineers saw the ensuing crash, put the engines in reverse, and jumped for their lives.

Both engines were severely damaged, and freight and passenger cars were derailed. The iron work up to the cylinders on both engines was badly twisted. The lighter passenger locomotive suffered the most damage, its tender was rammed into the cab and burst into flames. The freight locomotive managed to steam away unaided. The smoking car on the passenger train was reduced to kindling, but luckily, no one was inside. The conductor struck his head against one of the seats, and "except for a slight confused feeling" he was uninjured. A number of passengers received severe bruises, and one man fainted after being helped from the car.

The wrecking train arrived at 6. 30, some three hours after the collision, and the line at the South Windham station was cleared by 7. 30 pm. The engineer of the freight train was blamed for the accident because of his incorrect use of flags.

A young man named Blish went AWOL from the U.S. Navy. He was a Willimantic boy, born and bred, and resided on Summit Street with his parents. He was posted to the U.S. training ship Constitution - but he detested "life at sea" and ran away - back to Willimantic. He hid in sheds and barns in the town for several weeks, after his parents informed him that they intended to turn him in. Tired and hungry, he eventually returned to his parents house. His mother comforted him as his father called Willimantic's Chief of Police, who came to the house and arrested the runaway. Young Blish was escorted back to New York City on the following morning's early train, and back to the U.S.S. Constitution.

1917

A Liberty Bond Drive was underway in the mills of the American Thread Company (ATCO). The bonds, valued at \$100 and \$50 each, were sold to finance the war effort

against the Kaiser. They guaranteed a three and a half per cent profit on investments, free from federal, state or local taxes. ATCO bought up a large number and sold them to their employees, by deducting weekly amounts from their wages.

ATCO instigated a competition between the mills' 20 different departments. Daily sales records were recorded on a large chart, "prominently displayed" in each department. The latest chart revealed that the Winding dept. led the rankings with 110 bonds sold followed by Offices (109), Packing (106), and No. 5 mill spooling (89). All together 1,131 bonds, worth more than \$60,000 were sold in the Bond Drive.

1942

Henry Ficklinger, a retired baker of Storrs, began collecting parts of old motor cars back in 1912, with the idea of building a model of his own design. That model, the "Ficklinger Special" had just been registered as "ES 469" by the state motor vehicle department. Ficklinger designed his car specifically to overcome the inconvenience of gas rationing. It had a wheel base of 80 inches, an overall length of 128 inches and a 40 inch tread. The motor was an air-cooled four-cylinder English motorcycle engine. The steering came from a Ford truck, the fan came from a Hupmobile, the generator from a Whippet, the starter from a Pontiac, the muffler from a Terraplane. It also boasted an underslung chassis and headlights from an Austin coupe. The body, horn, parking lights and windshield had belonged to a 1932 Chevrolet. The hub caps had once graced a Ford V-8, and the gas tank had supplied a Corbin. The hood and steering wheel came from a make that had fled the designer's memory. The paint work was a vivid blue. Ficklinger claimed his "Special" could get more than 40 miles from the gallon.

1967

Windham's new teacher salary schedules contained incremental increases ranging from \$300 to \$450, and new pay scales dependent upon educational qualifications. The increases were estimated at \$105,000 for the 186 teaching positions. The main features in the complicated schedules calculated in many cases on "credit hours" were as follows;

The starting salary for a teacher fresh out of college with no teaching experience was increased \$300 to \$5,650. This would rise in 12 annual increments to \$8,940. This scale currently affected 71 Windham teachers. The master's degree scale began at \$6,150 with 13 annual steps up to \$9,900, applicable to 56 local educators. The new doctorate scale, currently inapplicable in Windham, began at \$7,150, rising through 13 steps to \$10,930.

The Superintendent of Schools, Dr. William Nelligan announced a number of vacancies for the forthcoming school year. A cafeteria director, a librarian, 2 female guidance counselors and 16 teaching positions.

Stanford Cohen, executive vice-president of Shop Rite Super Markets announced plans to open a store in Willimantic later in the year. The exact location would be revealed in the near future. The firm, a division of Mott's Super Markets Inc. began recruiting local

personnel for the new store. Advertisements for meat cutters were placed, along with a scheme offering a 24 month training program for apprentice meat cutters. The 10 supermarket chain achieved 1966 sales of \$34,900,000, up 37% from 1965. They projected sales of \$100,000,000 in the next five years. President Joseph Mott predicted 1967 sales of \$45,000,000. He announced that his chain planned a 505 expansion within the next two years. The Company also operated seven Alling Sport Shops, six family drug stores and two Barry liquor stores.