

May 02, 1992

THAT WAS THE WEEK THAT WAS

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

1892

The arrival of springtime in American cities during the 1890s meant that it was time to clean out the privy faults and cesspools. Many cities did not benefit from the luxury of sewage pipes. Willimantic was no exception. The obnoxious odor emitting from the Valley Street and Center Street area caused people to flee their homes as earthen privies and cesspools were unclogged. "The stench which penetrated the atmosphere was something unbearable." The Willimantic Board of Health investigated, but it would be several more years before every part of Willimantic was served by sewer pipes.

South Coventry was a scene of springtime activity. The T. H. Wood silk mill was having a large addition built by local contractors, Coleman and Boynton, who had just relocated their workshops in a building adjoining Parker's blacksmith shop. The Congregational Church's parsonage was being reshingled, and Willimantic's leading building contractor, John O'Sullivan, had just completed a large storehouse for the Tracy mill.

1917

The American Thread Company (ATCO) reacted to U.S. Government appeals by leasing out large tracts of land in Willimantic for their employees to grow vegetables to assist in the war drive. ATCO's officials allocated plots, 100 feet x 60 feet, in 25 acres of land south of the North Windham Road between the Natchaug River, and the road leading to the entrance to the Catholic cemetery just over the city line, considered to be a ten minute walk from the city center.

ATCO employees paid one dollar to rent the land, and four dollars for fertilizer. In return, ATCO ploughed each plot free of cost, and supplied seeds and potatoes at cost price - but laggards would not be tolerated! ATCO's "Home Gardening Movement" was the brainchild of agent Eugene Boss, and General Superintendent Charles Alpaugh, who put Charles W. Hill in charge. ATCO were keen to help their employees combat the high cost of living generated by the war. Home grown produce would ease the pressure on the Government, allowing them to concentrate their energies to defeat the Kaiser.

The response from ATCO's employees was overwhelming. Ninety applications were made on the opening day. ATCO ploughed the land and distributed 200 bushels of seed potatoes, and purchased large quantities of sweet corn and early and late beans. Hill

cataloged every allotment, noting the name of each worker and seeds planted. Each evening, hundreds of men, women and children headed out to their plots on the "American Thread Farm," armed with hoes and rakes. The main crop was potatoes. The Quidnick-Windham Company were impressed with ATCO's success, and opened up 20 plots for their workers on Watson Street.

1942

Dean Brossman, personnel supervisor at the new Pratt & Whitney plant under construction on West Main Street, addressed the Willimantic Rotarians at the Nathan Hale Hotel. Brossman dealt in generalities because of strict wartime censorship regulations. But he did reveal that it was the Company's policy to relocate Willimantic people in the new local plant who were employed at the Company's East Hartford plant. He added that it was not Pratt & Whitney's intention to lure workers away from industries already operating in town.

The University of Connecticut, the National Youth Administration and the United States Employment Service joined forces to create 75 training positions for "boys" aged 16 to 24, to train in the theory and practise of dairy and poultry farming. The successful applicants were paid \$30 for the four week course, but \$20 of it was earmarked for room and board. Three training periods were organized for June, July and August. 75% of the time was dedicated to practical experience, and only one week was given over for classroom work. Training was provided in milking, feeding and care of horses, tractor and machinery repair and chore work in dairy barns and poultry houses. Each graduate was guaranteed placement in a farm job.

1967

Irwin I. Krug, a prominent Willimantic lawyer, died at age 57. Krug was born in Eagleville in 1909. He graduated from Windham High in 1926, from NYU in 1930, and earned a Law Degree from Harvard in 1933. He opened a private law practice in Willimantic in July, 1933 at 784 Main Street. In 1938 he was appointed assistant prosecutor at the Willimantic Police Court. From 1942 to 1946, Krug served as a lieutenant in the U.S. army. After the war, he was appointed to the Connecticut State Board of Bar Examiners, a post held until 1962. In 1949, Krug was elected on the Democratic ticket to represent Windham in the state legislature, serving one two year term. He was Windham County's public defender from 1951 until 1960, and a Windham Justice of the Peace for 34 years. Krug was Windham town counsel from 1946 until 1950, and a Willimantic Housing Authority commissioner from 1946 up until his death. He was also prominent in local VFW circles, and had been a former president of the Windham Bar Association.

Environmental problems plagued Coventry residents. A large oil slick was contaminating Lake Wangumbaug and its northeastern public beaches. Bathers suffered with itchy skin, and dead fish were everywhere. The villain was identified as the Gorris

Oil Company. They had been blamed for oil pollution in the Lake two years earlier, but an attempt to solve the problem - by building earthen drainage dikes - had failed. Moves were afoot to remove the Company's storage tanks from their beachside position. Blame was also apportioned to leaking septic tanks and gasoline from an estimate 300 motorboats which used the Lake each summer.