

May 30, 1992

THAT WAS THE WEEK THAT WAS

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

1892

The Windham Manufacturing Company built a large new freight house in partnership with the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad Company. The sixty workers hired for the task were mostly Italians. Four laborers sat on the end of a flat car loaded with gravel, ready to unload it at its destination. A board on the flat car came loose, struck a rock and swept one of the unfortunate Italians under the wheels of the car, where he was "mangled like a jelly." Guiseppa Caserate (48) hailed from Piedmont, Italy. He had been in the United States for four months, and had lived in Willimantic for just 15 days. He left a widow and a daughter in Piedmont.

Willimantic's police force was considered to be the best dressed in eastern Connecticut. They patrolled the streets dressed in their latest fashionable acquisition - brown derby helmets with cords and tassels, designed for summer wear. Chief of Police, J. Henry Hills, admitted that they were copies of helmets currently worn by the police in New York City.

1917

The American Thread Company named their Boarding House "the Elms" and produced a sign bearing that name. They suspended the new sign from one of the large elm trees in front of the 1863 house. The sign was made to resemble tavern signs scripted in Old English letters, which were currently popular at New England hostelrys.

The call for increased farm production by the Government led to an exodus of students from the Storrs Agricultural College, who answered the call to go "back to the farm." The College President, C.L. Beach, and his faculty encouraged the students to go "into the field." Sixty-five left to take charge of state controlled farms. Twenty were recruited to take charge of garden work. Sixteen students were sent to Litchfield county to superintend the planting of pine tree seedlings. Twenty five students were sent to Plattsburg N.Y., and instructed how to train army officers in agricultural pursuits - and one of them, Helen Clark, was a woman! Only seventy students from an enrolment of two hundred and thirty were left studying at Storrs.

Resident agent A.J. Oxler announced that a program of capital investment was about to get under way at the Eagleville Cotton Company mills. The agents house was to be wired for electricity. If that was successful, it was planned to wire the worker's houses. Three electric street lights had been installed, and the mills were also lit by electricity.

The Rockville-Willimantic Lighting Company were contracted to do the work.

1942

Phillip R. Cohen, 73, died in Willimantic on May 28, 1942. Cohen had just celebrated his fiftieth anniversary as a clothing merchant in the city. He was born in Lithuania, August 27, 1868. He arrived in America as a young man, and in 1896 he formed a partnership with his father-in-law, Morris Rothblat and opened a clothing store on Main Street, Willimantic known as Cohen & Rothblat. In 1915, he went into business by himself and opened a store at 681 Main Street.

Cohen was involved in many local Jewish organizations, being a four time president of the Congregation Sons of Israel, and head of that organization when the synagogue was built on Bank Street, originally known as the Scenic Temple. He was also a former president of the B'rith Abraham and their treasurer when he died. He resided for many years at 182 Pleasant Street.

3,586 local consumers registered at Willimantic's five local schools for the sugar rationing program on the first of the four day registration period, and 3,378 ration books were issued. When the registration was complete more than 13,000 people had signed up.

1967

The late Isaac Asimov attracted a large crowd to Willimantic State College to listen to his lecture, "Human Transplants and Man of the Future." Dr. Asimov, a famed writer on almost any subject, but more well known for his science fiction writing, was a lecturing professor at Boston University. He told his Willimantic audience that if the authorities did not do anything about decreasing the rate of population growth, mankind was heading toward disaster. "Part of the blessings of the time is that we have a choice of disaster...a disaster if we use nuclear weapons, and a disaster if we don't." Asimov calculated that the earth would be as thickly populated as Manhattan by the year 2500 AD. He saw few alternatives, as the world population was doubling every 47 years. At that rate, even migration to newly discovered planets in the distant future would not solve the problem.

The American Thread Company (ATCO) created a new department, a unit to produce filament synthetics in their Willimantic plant. Manager E. B. Shaw appointed Rex Fairchild as manager of the new Filament Synthetics and Cotton Finishing Plant, which employed almost 50% of ATCO's current workforce. The reorganization gave promotion to Andrew Sabo, Oscar Bernier, Richard Brouillard, Arthur Michaud and Harry Larkin. Shaw stressed that the future of ATCO in Willimantic lay in synthetics. The consolidation of existing departments was necessary to maintain, "...the profitability of these vital links to our future."