

November 21, 1992

THAT WAS THE WEEK THAT WAS

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

1892

In these days before the development of the electronic news media, people gained most of their information and entertainment through the printed page. Advances in printing technology would soon allow newspapers to reproduce photographs on their pages was not yet fully developed, so the majority of newspapers used photographs as the basis of woodcuts and engravings which were more easily reproduced. This fact gave star status to the country's leading illustrators and cartoonists, whose work was widely used in the pages of newspapers, periodicals and magazines. Two of the most famous illustrators of the time were Frank Beard and Thomas Nast, whose satirical comments on late 19th century political figures, shocked and entertained the masses. There was great local interest, therefore, when it was discovered that Frank Beard was coming to Willimantic to address the local Women's club. Frank Beard held almost superstar status thanks to his brilliant illustrations in magazines and periodicals such as *Harpers*, *Scribners*, and *Century*. His illustrated, lectures were always sellouts. And his appearance in Windham was no exception.

The Loomer Opera House on Main Street was packed to the rafters with people who came to watch Beard's demonstration of the art of caricature, and listen to his humorous anecdotes. It was reported that the "famous cartoonist" entertained the crowd for more than two hours, by "...his swiftly sketched interesting and amusing caricatures with a running comment of his ideas, principles and qualities essential to success in this branch of art, interspersed with dry jokes and puns - a combination of instruction and amusement." This show was considered to be a little more "up-market" than the usual burlesque which attracted patrons to the Loomer in these pre-movie house days.

New Haven contractors, Lathrop and and Shea, completed work on the construction of the Consolidated railroad's new roundhouse at the Air Line junction. It was considered to be very beneficial to the health of Willimantic's economy, as a large number of new jobs would be created to maintain the steam engines held in the massive new structure. It was so designed that new engine "stalls" could be built when needed, added like the sections of a pie to the short arc of stalls now completed.

1917

W. J. Warner, an inspector for the Connecticut State Dairy and Food Commission, paid a surprise visit to Willimantic. He collected random samples of milk from area dairies for testing. As a result, two Mansfield dairymen were fined. One for selling watered

down milk, and the other for selling skimmed milk as full fat milk.

Employees of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad Company were hard at work filling in the swamp at the rear of their Air Line engine house, for the purpose of building a large "Y" so that an entire train could be turned on it. It would be principally used to turn large locomotives that were too big to turn on the existing roundhouse turntable. It was expected that when the "Y" was completed, and when the bridge over the Connecticut River was strengthened, more trains would be sent through Willimantic to relieve the heavy traffic on the Shore Line road. A gravel train was being used to haul material to fill in the swamp from an embankment near Hop River..

The state highway department was improving the state highway which ran through South Windham. Guilford Smith donated a large amount of land to the state, enabling the removal of two large trees from the sharp curve from South Windham's main street onto the Norwich highway, the scene of numerous automobile accidents. A horse watering tub was also removed from the junction, and relocated nearer to Avery's store. It was also hoped to secure land at Binns' corner in South Windham to enable more road widening on the busy highway between Norwich and Willimantic.

1942

A farewell party was organized and sponsored by the American Thread Company, and directed by George Twiss. It was staged in the town hall, and attended by the friends and families of the latest batch of Windham's young men recruited into the U.S. armed forces. The auditorium was packed as George Hickey delivered a patriotic address. The proceedings were then handed over to Harry Larkin Jr., the master of ceremonies. The program featured several short films. Refreshments were then served, and the large audience was finally entertained by a "home-talent" show. At the end of the evening, the sixty inductees received a present each from Mayor Russell Hinman.

1967

The University of Connecticut Board of Trustees approved increases in both the university fees and dormitory rates. Full time students on the Storrs campus currently paid \$190 a year. This would rise to \$250. Dormitory rates went up by \$50, to \$350 a year. President Homer Babbidge announced that UConn was the only state university in the country not to have increased its rates during the last two years. He explained to the Trustees that \$240 A year was far below the national average for state universities

Albert Harvey, Democratic candidate for Willimantic Mayor, unveiled a three point platform at the Windham Democratic Town Committee meeting in the Nathan Hale. It called for consolidation of the city and town government, support for redevelopment and urban renewal, and new facilities to house city government offices.