

October 17, 1992

THAT WAS THE WEEK THAT WAS

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

1892

The young people of Mansfield Center and Spring Hill went out on their annual hayride. They hired a large wagon, pulled by two horses and a mule. The wagon was currently employed transporting apples to a local cider mill. It was lined with straw and hay and - I can explain it no better than "Mr. Wormwood," who, 100 years eloquently described the weeks activities in Mansfield for the Willimantic Journal'. He described the pleasant moonlit evening of the hayride. "The weather was propitious, and fair, full Luna shed her mellow beams o'er a load of love lorn maidens and languishing swains packed in straw like liked smoked herring in a box...The vehicle was clean and well carpeted with straw, into which clambered ten rosy dimpled damsels with their gallant escorts, each carrying a fish horn." The hayride eventually passed down Valley Street in Willimantic, causing a "burly constable" to approach the wagon. He requested the occupants to keep the noise down. He received ten simultaneous blasts of fish horns for his troubles. The wagon had no springs, so there was much jolting, causing bruising, soreness and the application of liniment. Mr. Wormwood noted that the young men did not mind the jolts, as they caused "sweet confusion" in the wagon, thus allowing "ruby lips and incipient mustaches" to come into contact.

1917

A strangely attired individual caused "considerable curiosity" as he walked up Main Street carrying a large cane, and sporting a brown suit with leather leggings and a colorful Scotch hat. He acknowledged that he was a member of the Royal Flying Corps of Canada. This "Scotchman from Canada" was reluctant to discuss any details about the war. He said he had just dropped off in Willimantic to see the place.

South Coventry experienced a serious fire which caused more than \$6,000 worth of damage. The wooden building on Main Street opposite the Bidwell Tavern, known as the Washburn mill and owned by E. A. Tracy, was burned to the ground. The buildings consisted of a main building 20 x 70, and two additions. Until 1910, the mill had been used to manufacture silk, but it had been unoccupied until 1916 when Dana Jacquith leased the lower the lower floor for an auto repair shop. Mr. Jacquith's well equipped workshop was completely destroyed along with a five-passenger Grant touring car.

Mr. Jacquith discovered the blaze at 3. 30 pm on October 9, as he returned from coon hunting. When he opened the door to enter the garage he was forced back by the flames so that nothing could be saved. The alarm was sounded on the church bells and soon a

large crowd was on the scene. Attempts were made to douse the fire, with no success. Within 30 minutes, a motorized fire truck from the Willimantic Fire Department arrived on the scene, but they could do nothing to save the structure as the walls had already crashed to the ground.

## 1942

Ronald O'Hanley had just completed 50 years service for the New Haven Railroad. He was now the assistant superintendent of the Boston Division, and during the presentation of a diamond pin to celebrate the occasion, he announced that he fondly remembered his first job for the Railroad Company back in 1892 when he began work at the Willimantic Depot as a telegraph operator.

The death was announced of the Reverend Raymond Plumb, aged 56. He lived in Windham Center, but died during a visit to Boston. Plumb was a former pastor at the Windham Center Congregational. He was born in Bridgeport in 1886, and educated at Carleton College at Northfield, Minnesota, and at Yale. He was pastor at Windham from 1912 to 1919, and then spent 20 years as pastor at Edgewood, RI. Plumb retired in Windham in 1940, but still served part time in pulpits in Plainfield and Hanover.

## 1967

The phone lines to Willimantic's police station were jammed with calls from panicked locals who thought that flying saucers were landing. Local residents were being treated to a multi-colored display of lights in the night sky. The UFOs turned out to be traces of barium vapor emitted at intervals from an experimental atmospheric research rocket launched from Wallops Island, Virginia. The green, red, purple and orange lights seen in the night sky were part of an experiment to detect electric fields in the upper atmosphere, conducted from the Air Force Cambridge Research Laboratory at New Bedford, Mass.

Students at the University of Connecticut had recently listened to Barry Goldwater threatening to bomb China and escalate the war in Vietnam. They now had the chance to see the other side of the coin. Historian and Pulitzer Prize winner Arthur M. Schlesinger spoke to 1,500 students in the auditorium, packed to the seams two weeks earlier when ex-Senator Barry Goldwater espoused his controversial rules. Schlesinger, the Albert Schweitzer Professor of the Humanities at the City University of New York, attacked US policy in Vietnam in his speech, "America: Agenda for the Next Decade." He asserted that bombing was never a decisive weapon against an agrarian economy or guerrilla warfare. He believed the government was still deluded in thinking it was a super power, and that the CIA's wish to be omnipotent was an out-of-date attitude in a changing world, dominated more by nationalism than ideology. Schlesinger wanted a return to the concept of the Kennedy years, that the world is composed of a group of divergent societies and each should be permitted to progress by themselves.