

Flood of 1955

When the devastating flood of 1955 washed out the railroad bridge in Putnam, the faltering New Haven decided not to repair it and this ended passenger service in Willimantic. The New Haven operates limited freight service in Willimantic but The Central Vermont operates regular freight service connecting with the Canadian railroads and others and traveling through Willimantic down to New London.

In 1849 the first railroad train passing through Willimantic was a novelty. The more timid hid in the bushes along the tracks to watch it pass; the more venturesome like a lady in South Windham stood in the middle of the tracks and waved one of the first trains down with her apron to see if the passenger would like to buy squashes.

Trains Novelty Now

In 1967, a railroad passenger train passing through Willimantic is also a novelty. On the rare occasions when some excursion train like the spring and fall foliage tours come through, Windham parents bring their children out to see the train. This last spring photographers lined up along Pleasant street to see the last steam engine the railroad will use pass through town.

It is probably a safe bet to make that as many Windham youngsters under ten have not ever ridden on a train in this year of 1967 as had not been on one that first year of 1849, when Willimantic was about to enter its great railroad era.



FOOT OF RAILROAD STREET showing railroad station and depot built in 1880 and torn down in the late 1950s to make room for municipal parking lot.