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Willimantic's 1876 City View Shows How Far Town Has Come (Part Two of Four)

This city view lithograph of Willimantic, published in 1876, shows the lack of development north of Prospect Street and the undeveloped land on the west side of town.



The 1876 view is entitled Bird's Eye View of Willimantic. and measures 21 and 5/8 inches by 27 and 7/8 inches (55 by 71 cm) It was drawn by Howard Heston Bailey (1836 - 1878) and James Compton Hazen (1852 -1908). There is an original lithograph at the Connecticut State Library in Hartford, and a framed copy at the Willimantic Public Library.

Howard Bailey was born in Beloit, Ohio. He taught penmanship and worked in a photographic business before drawing ads showing business premises in cities in Kansas, Iowa and Nebraska. He

became a city artist in 1870 when he produced nine lithographs of places in central and southern Wisconsin. He drew with great speed and in 1871 he completed 17 city views. In 1874 he collaborated with 22-year-old James Compton Hazen. Bailey trained him in the techniques of city view illustration and Hazen acted sometimes as publisher for the team. They produced 14 views in 1875, seven in New York, two in Massachusetts, two in New Hampshire, two in New Jersey and one in Rhode Island. In 1876 they produced eight city views in New England. The Willimantic view was one of those. Bailey died in 1878 aged 42. In an eight-year career he left a record of towns and cities in the Midwest, the central Atlantic states and New England. He used a high level perspective, which makes his views instantly recognizable. This style reveals the patterns of streets, open spaces, public sites and neighborhoods. Bailey was famous for his careful representations of industrial and business districts. He gave detailed representation of the mill and manufacturing complexes, which dominated the urban scene in industrial communities like Willimantic.

James Hazen began work as artist's assistant to Howard Bailey in 1873, and he handled the business side of their ventures. He sold subscriptions and delivered completed lithographs, and often inked Bailey's original pencil drawings. The year after they collaborated on the Willimantic view, Hazen went to work for Bailey's younger brother, Oakley Hoopes Bailey for three years, and his final completed view of Lynn Woods, Lynn, Mass. in 1903 was produced with O. H. Bailey. Bailey and Hazen's drawing and

lithograph of Willimantic was recorded in the Willimantic Journal of August 18, 1876;

"J.C. Hazen and Co of New York have completed an isometric drawing of this village, showing every street, building and other local features. The drawing is to be lithographed and when finished will not only be a complete and accurate map of the village at the present time, but especially interesting and valuable for reference in years to come. The sketch is taken in pencil and of course conveys but a faint idea of the picture when completed as a handsomely tinted lithograph. The drawing is 20 x 24 inches in size and has been made with great care and seeming accuracy. A gentleman is now canvassing the village for their sale and we presume will meet with encouraging success. Messrs. Hazen & Co have recently finished similar drawings of Lowell, Lawrence, Holyoke, Manchester and Woonsocket and their work is spoken of by the local press in flattering terms. The price of the finished lithograph is \$3. 00, which is very reasonable."

This view reveals Willimantic just before its explosive growth, and it is interesting to note the lack of development on the "Hill District." However, it does reveal the extensive Bridge Street cotton mills, which predated the American Thread mills, and the Holland silk mills on Valley and Church Street. It also shows the original Willimantic railroad station, which was rebuilt several years later, and the city's extensive rail traffic.

Continued next week.