

April 25, 1998

The Taylor-Hatheway House

The historic 1889 Hatheway Mansion at 191 Prospect Street served as Willimantic's children's Library, 1957-1958



The hill district Victorian "mansion" featured this week has a slightly different history from those built on "chestnut hill" after the Civil War. The vast majority were not built by the city's silk and cotton mill owners, but by businessmen who provided the service industries for the booming 19th century textile community. However, Amos Morris Hatheway built the house at 191 Prospect Street, east of Chestnut Street, in 1889. He was a senior executive of the Willimantic Linen Company, the city's historic cotton thread-producing concern, which evolved into the American Thread Company. The Hatheway house is very similar in architectural style to the Asher house at 321 Prospect Street, located some several hundred yards to the west. The Hatheway mansion was built with a large round tower, ten large rooms, three

bathrooms, a palatial hallway, and broad, impressive stairways.

Amos Hatheway's daughter, Fannie, was married to Austin Dunham Boss, -- the son of the Willimantic Linen Company's famous agent and manager, Eugene Stowell Boss (1842-1920), who worked for American Thread for over 50 years. Boss named his son after Austin Dunham (1805-1877), who founded the Willimantic Linen company with Lawson Ives in 1854. Dunham gave his name to the Windham Textile & History Museum's Dunham Hall library, and everyone in Willimantic knows of Ives Street. Austin Dunham Boss became the agent of the Willimantic mills of the American Thread Company, after his father's retirement in 1916. Amos Hatheway's son, Edgar, was the office manager for American Thread in the 1920s. Amos Hatheway's surviving daughters, Kate and Marion, deeded the Hatheway mansion to city of Willimantic in 1957, as a children's library. The gift was made in the memory of Kate's late husband, Dr. Daniel Taylor, a well-known local dentist, and a nationally known expert and writer on the construction of telescopes, and her late brother Edgar, and was to be known as the Taylor-Hatheway Memorial Library.

Dr. Daniel Taylor originally practiced dentistry in New York City and later opened an office in Willimantic. He built a summerhouse on Groton Long point in 1920, where Marion lived in 1957. In 1923, Dr. Taylor purchased a 1731 house on Prospect Hill, Noank, overlooking Groton Long Point, Fisher's Island and the Long Island Sound. His

daughter Marion, who had married Woodbury Hunt, an art publisher, occupied this house. Mrs. Kate Hatheway Taylor, and Mrs. Marion Hatheway Hunt, presented the deed to Willimantic mayor, Florimond Bergeron, in a ceremony at Mrs. Hunt's Noank home.

The Hatheway sisters had been horrified at the cramped conditions in the Willimantic Library, and that town officials were considering closing the Library's children's room. In those days, the Library was located in the Windham Town Hall on Main Street. The Hatheway sisters were born in Willimantic. They had very happy memories of growing up in the Thread City, and thus decided to deed their family homestead to the city for the benefit of its children. Mayor Bergeron hailed the gift as one of the most generous individual donations the city had ever received. He declared that it filled a long-felt want, and that its central location would make it more accessible to the city's children who were attending Natchaug, St. Mary's and St. Joseph's, and the Frederick R. Noble Schools. The gift was also welcomed by town historian Dr. Brae Rafferty, library committeeman Robert Mustard, Charlie Hill of the Finance Committee, and Willis Ridgeway of the local branch of the Connecticut Bank and Trust Company.

Brae Rafferty pointed out that as far back as 1907, the city had complained about its cramped library. Also, the library had to turn down offers of historic papers and collections, particularly those of the Jillson family, builders of the town's earliest mills. It was envisaged that the city would build a new library on land adjacent to the new Taylor-Hatheway Memorial Library. However, the new library was built on Main Street in 1967, and the children's library relocated there after spending a decade in one of Willimantic's attractive Victorian mansions.