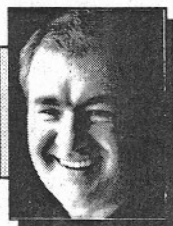


The Willimantic railroad depot is seen here at the turn of the century, some years before Edward B. McSweeney came to work there as a yardmaster in 1919.

## Recalling early-century life



Tom  
Beardsley

### Part One

An ideal way of recounting a community's history is through an oral interview of someone who has spent a lifetime in that community. Although Lillian (McSweeney) Tremblay was born in East Hartford on June 11, 1912, she has lived in Willimantic since 1920. Through Lillian's recollections, we can discover much about Willimantic life earlier this century including much about the old city post office where Lillian worked for 20 years.

Lillian's father, Edward B. McSweeney, was born in Nova Scotia in 1871, and after emigrating to the United States he worked for the New York, Hartford and New Haven Railroad. He met his wife, Mary Donahue, in Holyoke, Mass., and the couple had eight chil-

dren. After the end of World War I, the McSweeneys lived in East Hartford, and Edward was appointed yardmaster at the Willimantic railroad depot. On arrival in Willimantic, he found there was no available housing, and had to wait a year before sending for his family. The McSweeneys then moved into a small house on Watson Street.

Lillian McSweeney was the fourth of eight children. She recalls that the family moved into a larger house on South Street. It had one bath for the family of 10, and was heated by stoves. Lillian also remembers shortly after coming to Willimantic, the city's long-time mayor, Danny Dunn, had died, and she recalls how everyone was in mourning.

After South Street, the family moved to a larger house at 319 Valley St. Lillian attended the Model School, St. Joseph's Parochial School and

Windham High School from 1925-29. While at school, Lillian worked Saturdays in Woolworth's five and dime store, opposite the Loomer Opera House, from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m. for \$1.50. She recalls that the big treat after work was to walk over to the Chocolate Shop on Jackson Street to buy a 15-cent chocolate sundae.

Lillian left school as the Depression began, but found work in the office of the Harris 'V' Chain Co. in North Windham, a firm that manufactured a chain which helped ladies keep their undergarments in place. The company did great business in North Windham and had a sales office in Chicago. It was located next to Lester Hartsons factory, a company that manufactured silk mill supplies. She rode to work each day in a friend's car, and had lunch each day in a North Windham farmhouse.

*Continued next week.*