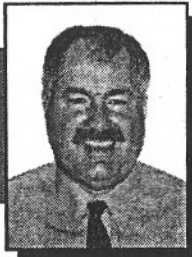


History

In South Windham, the Italianate flourished



Tom
Beardsley

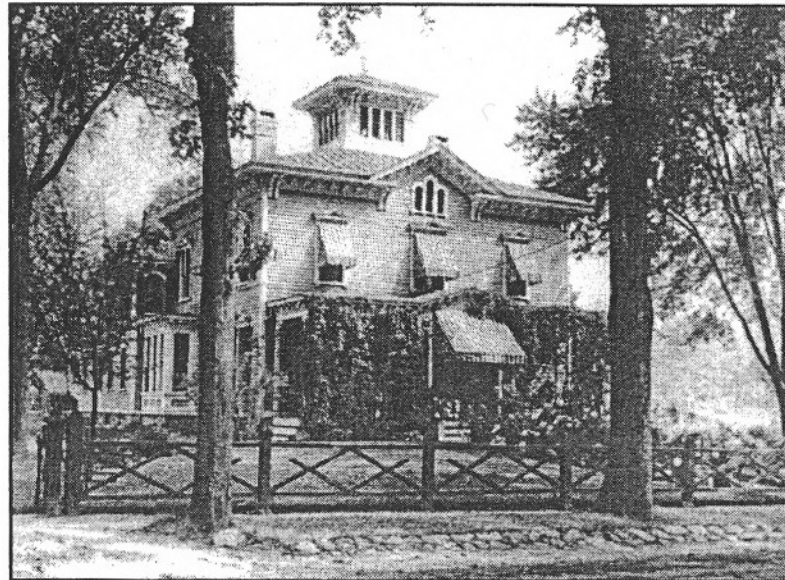
Part One of Two

Elisha Harlow Holmes Sr. (1799-1886) was born in Chesterfield. He built the fine Italianate mansion, pictured here, at South Windham for his son Elisha Harlow Holmes Jr., who was known as "Harlow," in 1871-72. Harlow married Sarah W. Johnson (1844-99) in 1866 at St. Paul's Episcopal Church at Windham Center. Work began on the house in 1871, and today it is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Andy Carey III.

The Italianate style employed in its design dominated American houses constructed between 1850 and 1880, particularly in the expanding Midwest, and in San Francisco.

The Holmes/Carey house is distinctive locally, because there are few Italianate houses in Windham/Willimantic.

The elder Elisha Harlow



The South Windham Italianate house built by Elisha Holmes in 1872, pictured above around 1900.

Holmes' wealth came from land and property he inherited from his in-laws, the Allen family, and from a highly successful business manufacturing plaster of Paris in his South Windham mill. He arrived in South Windham in 1818, and served a six-year apprenticeship as a cabinetmak-

er to Amos Denison Allen (1774-1855). His son, Edwin Allen, opened the type manufacturing shop, which lends its name to South Windham's Type Road.

Holmes' indenture papers were signed March 30, 1819. The Holmes family married well and became a dominant force in

South Windham throughout the 19th century. Elisha married Allen's daughter, Lydia (1801-70), on Dec. 4, 1823.

The couple had seven children, but only two grew to maturity — Lydia (1839-1913) and Elisha Harlow Holmes Jr. (1844-1915), who was always called "Harlow" to distinguish him from his father.

Elisha and Lydia Holmes underwent much heartache, losing five children. Adeline died at age 7 months in 1824, Henry died at age 17 months in 1830, and Harriet died at age 9 months in 1831. Mary Ellen died in 1837, age 10 years, and William Tracy tragically drowned in 1849, age 14.

Elisha H. Holmes made a fortune from his inheritances, and invested it wisely. He operated dredging boats at sea and in the Great Lakes in the 1840s and '50s, and also represented Windham in a number of political offices.

In 1850, shortly after the arrival of the railroad through South Windham, he built and operated a successful plaster mill wherein he manufactured plaster of Paris by the grinding of rock

gypsum into powder.

The most common use of rock gypsum today is in drywall. Elisha Holmes imported thousands of tons of rock gypsum from Nova Scotia, and ground it into plaster in his South Windham mill.

The plaster was subsequently shipped across the United States, thus adding to the Holmes family fortune.

The arrival of the paper machine manufacturing industry at South Windham in the form of Phelps and Spafford, and the Smith and Winchester Co. in the 1830s had laid the foundations of the Holmes family fortune.

In February 1833, Holmes inherited a great deal of land from the Allen family, and he sold it to George Spafford in May 1833.

The Spafford and Phelps Co. went into liquidation during the depression of 1837, and Charles Smith and Harvey Winchester acquired the factory. Smith and Winchester set out on a program of expansion, and Elisha H. Holmes sold them tracts of land in 1837 and 1838.

Continued next week

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