

History

Pleasant Street parsonage and its residents

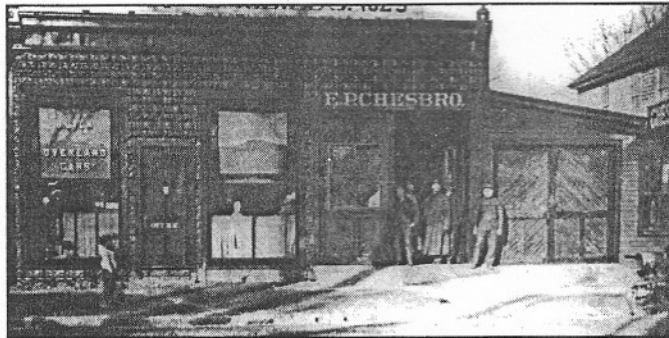
Part two of two

Ernest Chesboro and his family moved into the parsonage in the fall of 1896. Ernest's brother and partner, Samuel Chesboro, and his wife Emma, moved into 185 Pleasant St. in 1900.

Emma Chesboro, a noted soprano, tragically died of an ovarian cyst on June 22, 1911, at age 32. Shortly afterwards, Samuel moved to 281 Pleasant St., but continued in business with his brother at the parsonage.

In 1900, Samuel and Ernest Chesboro had opened a branch of their Main Street druggist business at 197 Pleasant St., and built a small factory beneath the parsonage, on the banks of the Willimantic River, to manufacture their drugs and potions. Those living "over-the-river" in Willimantic's "Forgotten Fourth" could obtain their drugstore provisions on Pleasant Street. "Chesboro Brothers" manufactured "Chesboro Liquid Corn Cure" and were agents for Huyler's Candies.

Ernest Pashur Chesboro was born in Mystic on July 29, 1858, and was educated in Dr. Fitch's private academy at South Windham. He worked in a carriage manufactory and as a clerk in the Willimantic Linen Co.'s store.



E.P. Chesboro lived in this parsonage from 1896 to 1917. The garage was located where Benny's is today. This photograph was taken at the rear of the building in 1925.

Shortly afterwards, Chesboro purchased Silas Loomer's insurance business, and went into the coal and lumber business with George Storrs Elliot. Chesboro ended his partnership with Elliot after seven years and established the first automobile business in Willimantic, selling the first Stanley Steamer in the city.

Ernest went in partnership with his brother Samuel, and formed Chesboro Brothers, druggists. The two then organized a real estate company, and bought and sold properties in the city. Ernest Chesboro was also active in local politics. He was a coun-

cilman for Willimantic's fourth ward and a Burgess of the old borough of Willimantic. From 1913 to 1915 he represented Windham in the state legislature, and in 1920 served a second term as Windham's first selectman. A 1920 biography of Chesboro noted that "His religious faith is that of the Baptist Church and he does everything in his power to spread its influence and is active in the church and its affiliated societies."

Chesboro became the president of the Willimantic Building Loan Association in the 1930s. He died on June 24, 1936, at 77.

On July 2, 1917, John and Bridget Jennings bought 197 Pleasant St. from Ernest P. Chesboro. The parsonage's third owners, had arrived in Willimantic in 1892 when John Jennings was hired as section boss of the Prov-

idence division of the New Haven railroad at Willimantic. John Jennings was born in Roscommon, Ireland in 1860, and after immigrating to the United States worked for many years on the railroads in Rhode Island. After their deaths in the 1920s, John and Bridget's daughter Evelyn and her husband Jack Farrell, remained until the early 1960s.

The parsonage is a classic example of the Italianate style. Many such houses were constructed in the United States between 1855 and 1880. The house at 197 Pleasant St. has a typical low-pitched hip roof that once had a square cupola. Many of its windows are of the inverted U shape. The style began in England as part of the picturesque movement, a reaction to formal, classical ideals in art and architecture that had been fashionable.

The Italianate movement emphasized rambling, informal Italian farmhouses, with their characteristic square towers, as models for Italian-style villa architecture. The decline of the style began with the financial panic of 1873 and the subsequent economic depression. When prosperity returned later in the decade, new housing fashions, particularly the Queen Anne style, were popular. Willimantic's hill district was developed primarily after the 1870s, and few Italianate houses were built there.

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