

History

The Jillson's impact



Tom Beardsley

Part two of two

Asa Jillson's grandsons, W.C. Jillson (1833-1898) and A.W. Jillson (1826-1893), carried on the family businesses in textiles, but expanded into the banking and insurance industries.

William Curtis Jillson became one of Willimantic's most prominent citizens. From 1879 until 1892, he represented Willimantic in the Connecticut legislature. He was president and vice president of two of Willimantic's banks, and a vice president of the Hartford Life and Annuity Co.

He died in the house he had lived in since 1836. It is still standing and is the first house on the left as you take Route 32 south over the Willimantic River. W. C. Jillson's most profitable enterprise, however, was located in Columbia.

In 1897, the Hartford Courant visited W. C. Jillson's Hop River mill village and noted that the mills were running "to the full extent of their machinery, and had increased their capacity on cotton warps, double and twisted yarns and threads, and have added several looms for weaving.



William Curtis Jillson, the last of the Willimantic dynasty of Jillsons died in the city in 1898.

"Mr. Jillson does all he can for the comfort of his employees, and the little village of Hop River presents an attractive appearance. He has recently borne nearly the entire expense of a new schoolhouse for the district.

"Mr. Jillson's interests are not wholly confined to the Hop River enterprise, flourishing as that is, but he is also President of the First National Bank, of Will-

imantic, and the Merchants' Loan and Trust Company, and vice president of the Dime Savings Bank."

Shortly afterwards, the Hop River Warp Co. was reorganized as the Excelsior Web and Tape Co. and administered by W. C. Jillson's son, W.H. Jillson.

William Curtis Jillson died on Jan. 2, 1898 in the house he had lived in since 1836.

W. C. Jillson's elder brother, Asa W. Jillson, was born in Boston in 1826, but moved to Willimantic soon afterwards.

He represented Windham in Connecticut's General Assembly in 1857.

Whilst in Willimantic he was involved with the manufacture of wool and he assisted William Curtis Jillson in the management of the Hop River mill.

Asa W. Jillson came to prominence in Hartford in the fire insurance trade as an underwriter, and from 1864 and 1888 was the vice president of the Phoenix Fire Insurance Co. of Hartford. He died in Hartford on April 22, 1893.

William Curtis Jillson's death in 1898 ended three generations of the Jillson family's dominance of the local economy and politics.

The name Jillson lives on in Willimantic, however, in the form of the Jillson House, the headquarters of the Windham Historical Society, and Jillson Square, or the major parcel.

This is a centrally located piece of land that came into existence with the demolition of a section of downtown Willimantic between 1972-1976.

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