

History

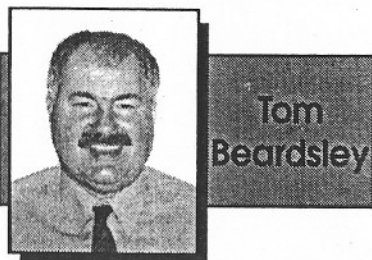
The rich history of the house at 287 Summit St.

Part one of two

Every Christmas locals and visitors to town are treated to an outstanding display of lights at 287 Summit St., the home of Dan Haggerty and family. The magnificent light shows tend to overshadow the rich history of the Haggerty homestead.

The history dates back to 1877 when the borough of Willimantic decided to lay a new street from east-to-west between High Street and Jackson Street. The following year, a local builder, James Picknell, built the Haggerty house, and it became one of the first houses on the "proposed street." This area became the city's first suburb, as it stood on the "summit" of Prospect Hill. The suburb attracted some of the borough's leading citizens, including George Dimock, a central figure in the development of the Holland Silk Co., who lived for many years at 275 Summit St.

Picknell had built the house for Charles Keables on a piece of land, purchased by Keables on Oct. 9, 1877. Keables was a carpenter and a painter in town. He died on June 22, 1882, and was heavily in debt to Robert Knott, an overseer at the Willimantic Linen Co., and the builder of his house, James Picknell. In the set-



tlement of Keables' estate Picknell and Knott gained joint ownership of Keables' house. Picknell purchased Knott's share of the Summit Street house in 1884, and sold it to Charles Nelson Daniels in the summer of 1888.

Willimantic's streets were renumbered in 1891, and Daniels' new house became 287 Summit Street. Up until 1892, Summit St. only extended east from High Street to Charles Beckwith's octagon house, and George Dimock's cottage, now occupied by Virginia Darrow. In that year Summit Street was constructed through to Church Street, and opened up many desirable lots across farmland once owned by Eli Hewitt.

Charles Nelson Daniels (1849-1916) was a significant figure in Willimantic's history.

His father, Nelson Fitch Daniels, was of old Yankee stock, and was the superintendent of the Orleans County, N.Y., poor

house. He was later a superintendent of the Erie Canal. His son Charles was born at Barre, N.Y. Nelson Daniels' wife, Alenda Clark Daniels was a direct descendant of William Bradford of the Mayflower, and later governor of the Plymouth Colony. After Nelson Daniels' death in 1857 the family relocated to Columbia, the home of Alenda Daniels' family.

Charles N. Daniels was educated privately at Alton, Ill.. He had worked on his uncle's farm, as a switchman on the railroad, as a bookkeeper in a Willimantic lumberyard. In 1882 he became foreman in George K. Nason's lumberyard (Willimantic Lumber and Coal). Daniels would hold a number of important political posts in the Republican Party. He was chairman of Windham's Republican Town Committee in 1884, 1890, 1894 and 1898. In 1896 and 1898 he was a member of the Republican State Central Committee from the 17th District. Daniels was treasurer of Willimantic from 1880 until 1889, treasurer of the water fund in 1885, burgess of the borough from 1889 until 1890, chief engineer of the Willimantic Fire Department from 1895 until 1890. He was also a quartermaster sergeant in the Third Regi-



287 Summit St., Willimantic

ment of the Connecticut National Guard from 1877 until 1882. In 1889, President Harrison appointed Daniels as Willimantic's postmaster. These posts were political appointments. Postmasters were often local businessmen and traders who operated the post office from their premises.

In 1890, Daniels moved the Willimantic post office to the Loomer Opera House block, and it remained there until 1940 when the opera house was demolished. The office in the opera

house block continued as a sub-post office after the building of the city's first purpose-built post office in 1911. In 1894, President Cleveland replaced Daniels as postmaster with Joel Webb. Daniels was then appointed foreman in the Lincoln and Boss lumberyard. In November 1896 he was elected judge of probate for the Windham District.

Continued next week

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