



Willimantic Victorian Neighborhood Association

P.O. Box 555, Willimantic, CT 06226

WWW.VictorianWillimantic.org

Neighborhood News

Summer '16

By Bob Horrocks

I'm not a fan of summer vacation travel. The weather, traffic, and crowds of people are, at best, unpredictable and, at worse, major barriers to overcome. In recent travels on the Garden State Parkway (NJ) I tried to maintain a steady driving speed of 65 only to be consistently passed by vehicles traveling 75-80 miles an hour. Regardless, I have made frequent trips to be with family on the Jersey coast. In spite of its vast wetlands and pine baron forests, New Jersey is known as the most densely populated state in the union, and at times I think they are all on the roads when I am travelling. I am familiar with hair raising attempts to merge into traffic lanes approaching the Tappan Zee Bridge, and major traffic slow-downs as highway workers trim branches from trees. Why, I ask, is this done during heavy traffic time?

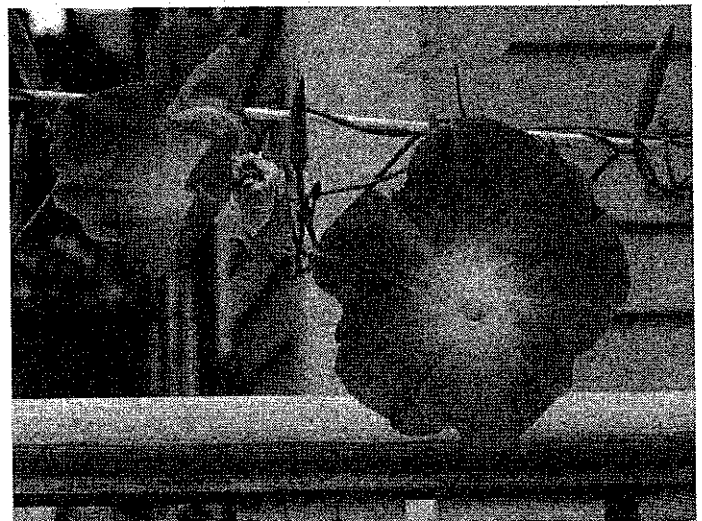
Regardless, Pam and I have enjoyed a few weekends with our family and grandchildren who participated in a week of surfing camp (thanks to grandpa). This experience provided them with great stories when they returned to their city schools in Philadelphia and Washington. So I guess the one good thing about summer vacation travel is the opportunity to be with family.

But if truth be known, I prefer to be in Willimantic in the summer. In addition to the Victorian Association's Annual Home Tour and Garden Party, Pam and I attended the Roseland Cottage Victorian Festival in Woodstock; the Windham Textile Museum's garden party; the Connecticut Railroad Museum's Railroad Days event; the always-wonderful Jazz in the Garden party in Windham Center; and, of course, Willimantic's famed Third Thursday events. I also took advantage of the expanded Farmer's Market on Jillson Square.

I asked friends where they travelled this summer and found that many are much more adventurous than I. The Larys drove to Washington state and stopped at Mount Rushmore, among other places. The Kentons

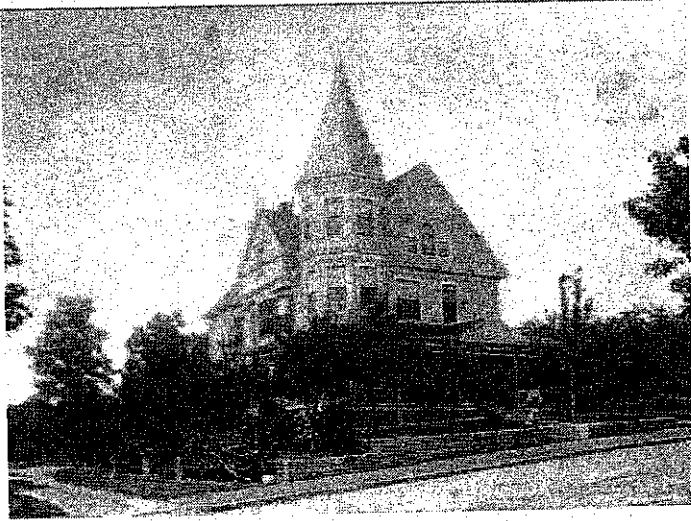
spent time in their beach house on the coast of Maine; the Laceys went to New York City, the Rhode Island shore, as well as the Berkshires; while the Shooks visited Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks and then attended an Irish Festival in Milwaukee. Shirley and her children visited friends in Richmond, Virginia, and later stayed at the Mt. Washington Inn in New Hampshire for their annual family vacation. Others went to Canada and Maryland.

This summer I discovered a new patio restaurant that is an extension of Pleasant Pizza, a new coffee shop at 869 Main Street, and a pizza truck behind Scott's Cyclery. Pam and I have eaten at the outdoor patio of Willi Brew and the patio in the rear of Cafémantic. We also enjoyed the folk-style music on the lawn of the Windham Center Library by the group "Seldom Heard." Ruth Alumbaugh arranged for music on Sunday afternoons at the Garden on the Bridge. On two occasions we were treated to the music of the Quiet Corner Fiddlers. A vocal group sang songs from their upcoming musical "Pirates of Penzance." All in all, it was a wonderful summer capped off by the daily appearance of 30 large, purple morning glories in Pam's beautiful garden. I'm ready for fall.



The Prominent Buck Family

Some of our readers may remember an interesting article in the Chronicle about 3 North St. residents who travelled to Pennsylvania to retrieve a 19th century sleigh that had belonged to the Buck family. The sleigh had originally been stored in the barn at the rear of the property at 158 North St.



Our story actually begins when a "stranger" rings the doorbell at the William A. Buck 1896 Queen Anne Victorian and announces that he is Ted Pollard, Buck's great grandson. He then told the home's occupants, Jennifer and Jason White, that he was here from his home in Wayne, Pennsylvania to visit the graves of his forbears in the Old Willimantic Cemetery.

He was moving to Mexico soon and wanted to see if there was any interest here in having the vintage sleigh that had been in the barn before he took it to Pennsylvania in 1989.

You know the rest. The Whites and neighbor Paul Ashton travelled to Pollard's home and returned the sleigh, not to the barn, but to the WTHM where it awaits funds for restoration.

Visitors may see it there and ask about the name on the rear, George S. Elliott. The owner, or the manufacturer? Another mystery we were recently able to solve. George Elliott owned and operated a business at 1015 Main Street where he manufactured, sold, and repaired wagons, carriages, sleighs, and bicycles. He lived in the Queen Anne home at 347 Prospect Street.

Jennifer and Ted emailed each other, and Pollard shared new information about his illustrious Willimantic ancestors.

The family was originally from Westford/Ashford where Edwin A. Buck, William's father, was born in 1832. He taught school there and was active in public service, having held nearly every town office. He also established the Westford Glassworks before moving to Willimantic in 1876.

Buck's new firm, E. A. Buck & Co., held an advantageous position in Willimantic's industrial life,

as it was the only grain mill in the city or within a wide area. Its business on Main Street had the N.Y. & N.E. railroad to the rear which allowed for easy transport of its product. His son, William A. Buck (1866-1945) continued as a head of the enterprise in 1885 and soon built his home at 158 North St. next to the 2nd Empire Mansard roof mansion of his father at 150 North Street. Adjacent to that residence at 183 Prospect St., E.A.'s daughter and her husband, Arthur I. Bill, built the gracious home now owned by WVNA member Charlie Krich.

According to William A. Buck's obituary in the October 4, 1945, issue of the *Willimantic Daily Chronicle*, he died in his home of a heart attack. He had served as a town selectmen for 14 years and also served as a member of the board of aldermen for the city government before being elected to the state Senate in 1876, state treasurer, and finally Bank Commissioner of Connecticut. Ted Pollard is listed as his only great-grandson.

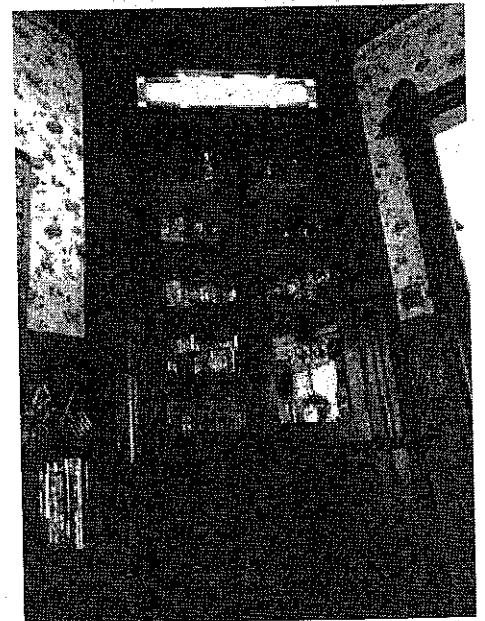
Given the history of the Bucks, father and son, and the story of the sleigh, somehow, the initial reason behind this feature - a description of the house - got lost in the historical details.

The photo shows a large 3-story building with an octagonal tower, asymmetrical windows, and a generous porch around much of the body of the house. Double entry doors lead to a foyer with a unique newell post at the curved bottom stair, and a handsome fireplace with beveled square mirror and tile surrounds.

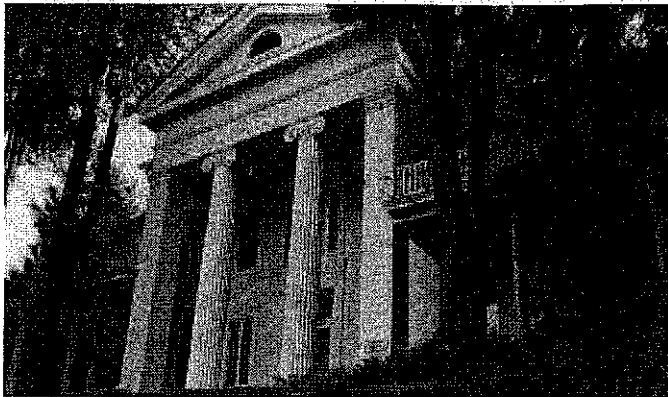
The five-window bay in the parlor and the huge windows throughout bathe the rooms in sunlight. The *lincrusta* on some walls, five sets of pocket doors, and another fireplace with oval mirror on top of the mantle are testament to the honorable status of the Buck family.

Thanks to Jennifer White for generously giving so much of her time to us on the tour and for sharing Pollard's extensive research. We especially appreciate it

because she and her family are currently renovating a building on High St. for a teahouse, *Leaf and Flour*. That in itself is a massive undertaking, but add to it their move to a Home Tour house on Windham Street that they have recently purchased. More about both in upcoming newsletters.



Fitch House B & B



Willimantic residents are frequently asked by visiting friends and relatives to recommend a nearby bed and breakfast. Well, we are pleased to announce that there is now one just 3 miles outside the city on route 195 in Mansfield Center. It even has a Willimantic connection, be it ever so slight.

The Edwin S. Fitch (1812-1875) Greek Revival mansion sits majestically on a steep knoll just west of the intersection of Rts. 195 and 89 at 563 Storrs Road. Fitch, who was an architect and builder, was born in Willimantic. (Efforts to connect him with this city's Fitch House which was moved to Old Sturbridge Village in 1954 have been unsuccessful.)

The new owners are Mia and Glen who look forward to welcoming guests to the authentically furnished 19th-century home with comfortable suites and hearty country breakfasts. Much of the fare is prepared from their own chickens, strawberry patch, and fruit trees.

Mia is an attractive, outgoing young woman whose personality is perfect for the hospitality business. We reserved accommodations for Chicago relatives for a weekend. After their stay at the Fitch House, they spoke glowingly of the ambience and Mia's graciousness. A return stay is definitely on their agenda.

So, without reservation, we heartily recommend the Fitch B&B as a welcome addition to our neighboring community.

Call to tour the home or to book a reservation. You will be glad you did.

Phone 310-868-4445. E-Mail: mia@fitchhouse.com

News from the Mill Museum

We just received a call from Bill McBride of Jumping Frog in Hartford, a dealer in rare books and memorabilia. He has purchased a collection of 885 documents that originated with Charles Fenton, a Willimantic-area figure, Civil War soldier, and Willimantic/Mansfield silk mill manager from the 19th century. Below is a link to information about the collection. The dealer offered to sell the collection to the Mill Museum for \$8,000. Needless to say, the Mill Museum does not have \$8,000 for acquiring artifacts. Indeed, our policy is not to pay for artifacts at all. I told him that we really couldn't meet his price, but that I would publicize the sale in the community. He has already offered the collection for sale to other museums and archives, and even lowered his price to "break-even," to no avail. His next step is to break it up into smaller portions and sell it piecemeal to private collectors. It is always a shame when historic materials move into private collections, but sometimes it is only the private collectors who can afford them. In any case, I am carrying through on my promise to publicize the existence of the collection. So, what do you think? Do any of our members have \$8,000 lying around and a strong belief that this collection is worth that much and ought to be kept together and made available to the public?

Jamie Eves, Executive Director

Link:

<http://www.ebay.com/itm/887-Civil-War-Documents-Capt-Charles-Fenton-QM-21st-CT-Volunteer-Infantry-1862-5-/371722750984?hash=item568c670c08:g:Y0sAAOSwwo1Xcdkb>

WANTED:

- Ideas for Upcoming Feature Articles
- Homes not yet researched
- Interesting & Unique Family Histories

Garden Party Swings

WVNA bid summer farewell with its much-anticipated annual garden party. Each year the social committee chaired by JM Schold and Doug Lary manages to secure an entirely different and inviting venue. This year was no exception.

The handsomely landscaped rear yard of Alex and Becky Salustri with its rolling lawn, garden shed, pavers, fountain, and fire pit conversation area was the festive setting for the 10th event. Weather superb, guests friendly, delicious food, and music. What more could one desire?

The highlight of the 4-7 social was the music of "A Moment's Notice," musicians Roger Glidden, Phil Palonen, and Joe Tominelli, generously sponsored by the hosts. The up-tempo music prompted many guests to dance – be they in long dress and Victorian



headgear or in casual jeans. Thank you, Becky and Alex, for this treat.

As usual, the varied hors d'oeuvres and delectable desserts were prepared by WVNA member gourmet cooks. (Well, maybe not all of them fit that description!) These are, no doubt, the same folks who pitch in to prepare the site, welcome newcomers, and put a very positive face on our organization.

As usual, this was a fundraiser to continue to improve the community and our role in it. This year proceeds will provide landscaping to the Welcome to Victorian Willimantic sign on Windham Rd. Ladd Nurseries has design plans for us to select. Be on the lookout for these improvements in the months ahead.

Certificates of Beautification

The Willimantic Victorian Neighborhood Association is pleased to provide award certificates to the following members of the community who, through their actions, demonstrate positive support for their neighborhood and our town:

Lorraine Gallup • 465 Prospect Street

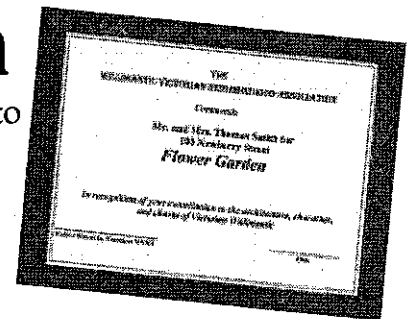
For the beauty of this property from its whimsical purple door to the grouping of plants, boulders and shrubs near the road.

Richard Bloomer • 242 Prospect Street

For his delightful pocket garden of flowers, fountain, and prolific colorful tulips and zinnias.

Sara Winter & Mark Svetz • 315 Pleasant Street

For the bright and cheerful new paint scheme which the couple planned and executed themselves. Bravo!



Niti Pandey & Matt Rutabage • 208 Summit Street

For the gorgeous spring plantings cascading down the stone wall outlining the property.

Pat Miller & Barbara Wright • 144 Chestnut Street

For the ultra classic, two-toned grey paint transformation of this unique home which is highlighted with multiple and interesting windows.

WILLIMANTIC VICTORIAN NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Minutes, June 26, 2016 - 39 Davis Street, Willimantic

President Bob Horrocks called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. The following members were in attendance: Richard Bloomer, Jean DeSmet, Bob Hackamack, Pam and Robert Horrocks, Faith and Steve Kenton, Barbara and Jim Lacey, Bette and Gordon MacDonald, Shirley C. Mustard, Jan-Maya Schold (with sister, Leslie), Pam Shooks, and Debbie and David Stoloff.

Victorian Days Home Tour programs were available for attendees. Thanks expressed to Jean and Bob for hosting the Potluck Supper today.

President Horrocks reported that there was excellent sponsorship for Victorian Days, both private and business sponsors. The Friday night Concert was very well attended as well as the Garden event. The official monetary report for Victorian Days will be forthcoming from the Treasurer at a later date. The tea had well over 100 attendees. Banners were sold and the Cemetery tour had 8 participants led by Bev York, and the Mill Tour had 12 led by Jamie Eves. The architecture lecture had a good number attending on Saturday but only a small number on Sunday. The weather forecast was ominous for Sunday and this affected attendance. The Willimantic Brewing Company had a special Ale to celebrate Victorian Days. The Steampunk participants seemed very pleased with being a part of the experience and showed an interest in participating next year as well.

The Horse and Wagon was costly at \$800.00 a day, as was the Reception for Home Owners with \$400.00 spent. Costs of programs, ads, etc. and income will be reviewed for future planning. Overall, Bob reported there were 200 on the Victorian House tours; 135 at the Friday night concert; and 100 at the Victorian Tea. Docents and 35 volunteer musicians helped make the weekend a success.

Accounting from the Treasurer will assure that the goal of covering expenses was met. However, it was noted that the main goal remains to be to highlight our town and keep spirits high. The future may show some refinement of some areas. There remains a love for old houses, concerts and musicians. Presumably, the local businesses benefitted from the influx of visitors too.

The attendees were asked for their comments and suggestions. Jean mentioned that there are a large number of activities on that one weekend which led to much work and perhaps the events should be spread over a time period rather than one weekend. The themes at the homes on the tour seemed to be a good idea -- stained glass at the home of Dick Bloomer and wedding theme at the home of Becky and Alex Salustri. It is now our 17th year of Victorian Days. Many phone calls inquiring about the events were handled and the reports from Windham Center were good.

President Horrocks asked for members to consider marching for the WVNA in the upcoming Boom Box Parade on July 4. The Garden Party will be August 28 at the home of Becky and Alex Salustri. The WVNA is sponsoring the Concerts at the Garden on the Bridge on June 5, July 3 and August 7, 2016.

Respectfully submitted, Pamela M. Shooks, Secretary



Willimantic Victorian Neighborhood Association

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Please call on the WVNA Officers & Board for Information or Assistance:

President, Bob Horrocks	456-1666
Vice President, Barbara Lacey	456-1214
Secretary, Pamela Shooks	456-3135
Treasurer, Claire Lary	456-3088
Membership, Pam Horrocks*	456-1666
Home Tour & Newsletter, Lynn Duval*	456-4476
Social Chairs, Doug Lary	456-3088
JM Schold	617-6226
Publicity, Public Relations, Newsletter	
Shirley Mustard	423-1481
Legal, Charles Krich	456-8874
Board Members	
Jennifer Clark	208-6257
Sue Humes	423-0576
James Lacey	456-1214
Gordon MacDonald	423-8845

* Non-voting members

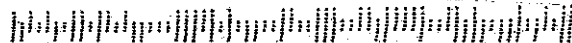


Photo Credits:

Fitch House
Bob Horrocks
Jennifer White

The Willimantic Victorian
Neighborhood Association
is the key to communication in
regard to the Hill Section,
the Home Tour, Economic
Development and a better quality of
life in our town.

Join today if you have not already
done so. Send us your ideas and
thoughts, participate in the
meetings and events.

Be a part of this wonderful
community and this extraordinary
neighborhood.

Call Bob Horrocks (860) 456-1666.

Calendar of Events

Next Meeting of the
Willimantic Victorian Neighborhood
Association

Windham Textile & History Museum

Dugan Building, 411 Main St.

Sunday, September 25, 3:30 pm

Guest Speaker:

Lance Ladd - Ladd's Garden Center

Design Suggestions for

"Welcome To Willimantic" Sign

Potluck Supper to follow

The Horrocks Home

201 Lewiston Avenue