

During these years he was in Broad Brook with his family managing a farm for James S. Barber, who was retiring. Cream and milk were sold to the Ellington Creamery. The farm had a small peat bog.

# 1881-1891

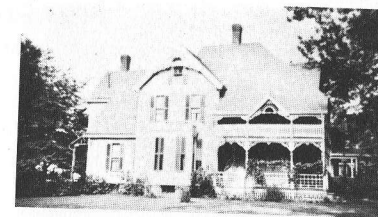
He went back to carpenter work and lived in East Hartford where the hospital now stands. For a short time he worked for Joseph E. Carroll, the builder.

He did some sort of carpenter work in the old Garvan Block at Main and Governor Streets. Albert Gaines had a harness shop there soon after it was built; here also was H. W. Vinton's store and the Post Office. Dr. Pratt walked up from his office with striped trousers and tall hat for the morning mail and to meet other persons, well attired, among them Mr. Joseph Carroll, the insurance man of Main Street.

Among other things he did while working for the town was the removal of the great Elm trees growing in the center of Burnside Avenue eastward towards Bidwell Curve. There was no great earth-moving machinery then, such as we have today, so the roots were cut off in great circles around the trees; then the trees were pulled over by steel cables attached to a windlass. The trunks were then cut off, and the root system, heavy with earth, dropped into holes dug deep enough to receive the massive chunks.

In 1899 he was able to power his woodworking machinery in his shop on the Avenue with electricity supplied by the Hartford Electric Light Company. There were no poles on the Avenue but there was a line close by on Prospect Street. By erecting a pole, he was able to have power with a special line and transformer.

After the death of his father in 1901, he bought real estate in East Hartford: the Samuel Phelps Place at Main and Bissell Street, the Farnum Place on Governor Street and the old Hurlburt Place on Burnside Avenue. Along with these he was building his own residence on Hartford Avenue, now the Boulevard.



He now felt financially able to go into contracting himself and soon received the contract for the chapel of the First Congregational Church, Dennerlien's Warehouse and Elijah Ackley's house on North Main Street, also considerable town work. In 1894, as contractor, he spent more than a year building Mr. Horace J. Wickham's residence, known as "The Pines" and other buildings of the extensive estate.



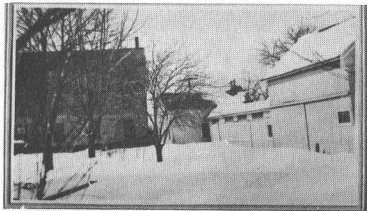
This later became known as Wickham Park, partly in East Hartford but largely in Manchester. On the east it is the end of the "three mile lots" and extends into the "five mile lots" or "common lands" which later became Oxford Parish, known to the Indians as "Upperquog" lands.

His business now well established, for thirty years or more he was building in and out of town continually. There were many warehouses, mills for the J. B. Williams Company, Vernon Woolen Company, Talcott Brothers, Silver Lane Pickle Company and in Hartford work for the Industrial and Realty Company and the Building Loan Association. There was residential work for J. C. Webster of the Aetna Life Insurance Company, Linus T. Fenn, William H. Corbin, H. D. Whitney and others.

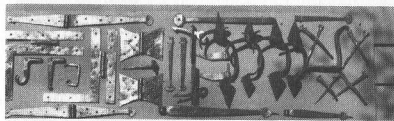
1906



He considered Mr. Charles Merriman's house on Main Street (site of the present post office) the most modern and expensive of the thirty or more homes he built in East Hartford.



Shop, Lumber Shed and Barn on Hartford Avenue

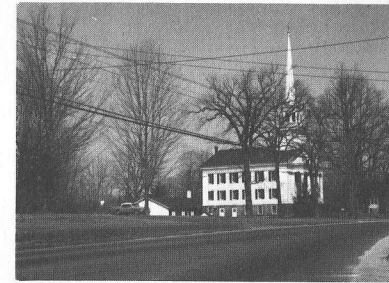


The old stairway from the Samuel Phelps place that stood on the south corner of Bissell and Main Streets was in his lumber shed for some time. It was built with a very steep pitch but was of no artistic or antique value. This hand-made hardware was saved when the house was razed soon after 1901, having been built around 1800.



Many of the house foundations in East Hartford of that period were of waste brown stone from the Middletown quarries and were brought up the river by barge, to be delivered to dealers in Hartford.

One Spring when he needed stone, the river was at flood tide and the docks were under water, so they brought the tug and barge right up through the meadows to Prospect Street and Hartford Avenue and unloaded the stone right on the meadow bank.



In 1896 the steeple of the Vernon Center Church had become unsafe. With the aid of the town's people and by sawing through and using cables, they were able to guide it away from the church when falling.

The church was destroyed by fire Saturday afternoon Jan. 23, 1965

A railroad flat car of hemlock lumber, ordered in February 1898 from Winsted, Connecticut, was one solid piece of ice and snow when it arrived at the East Hartford yards. It cost about as much to unload it as the material was worth.

The chandelier for the new chapel was of kerosene oil burning lamps and was quite massive. It came furnished with a heavy suspension rod, threaded, washers and head nut. It was installed some twelve feet or more high from the floor and it was lighted lamp by lamp from a tall stepladder.

Somehow by chance the janitor found that by turning the chandelier past the stepladder it would save both his time and the work of climbing up and down the ladder to complete the lighting.

This way of lighting the lamps worked for some time as he likely did not always rotate the lamps in the same direction but the inevitable was eventually bound to happen. The suspension rod should have been of the turn-buckle type, i.e.; threaded rod and swivel joint. It was being lighted one evening for service; the rod threads left the nut and the chandelier fell to the floor and every light went out in the fall. I believe the janitor was knocked off the ladder and was injured.

Mr. and Mrs. Driggs were both members of the First Congregational Church of East Hartford. He was a bass singer in the choir and he often helped out in solo work, though his voice was of low bass character. Funeral services at the church were frequent and he and Dr. McKnight were called for many of them. Most often Miss Louise Gilman was Soprano; Mrs. Frank Forbes (Mabel Terry), Alto; and Mr. William H. Olmsted, Tenor.

### Alfred Waldo Driggs



1880-1883

Five years old, I lived in a tenement house alongside the Hockanum River in Talcottville, seeing men spread paper-board on the ground to dry in the sun. This was the first remembrance of my childhood.

There was a cabinet organ in the parlor and I remember standing of one foot pumping the bellows to obtain a few wheezy tones. That was usually on a Sunday when the folks were likely to have a hymn sing.

1883-1888

The family was then living in the Timothy Keeney section of Manchester and soon after moved to the Barberville section of Broad Brook. I walked to the village to take my cabinet organ lesson.

1888-1891

When twelve years old I lived in East Hartford, the year of the blizzard and I well remember the tunnel dug in order to get to the woodshed. We lived in a house where the hospital now stands.

In trying to ride a high two wheel bicycle, I used to climb the sidewalk

fence first and push off from there. Mr. Joseph O. Goodwin had one with the little wheel in front.

1891-1894

Father was building the new chapel at the church and the job of picking up the waste wood, getting it home and into the woodshed, was given to me. The minister came around once in awhile, generally Monday forenoon, to "inspect" the work and the men.

The family moved to Glastonbury for a short time as father was building the soap mill there. The new experience of going back and forth to school on the stage coach was exciting. Miss Laura Ensign was a frequent passenger and often rode on the seat with Mr. Hodge, the stage driver; quite a privilege at that time.

My church activities included the Christian Endeavor Society and the Boy's Brigade. The latter organization was given a flag. Deacon William's daughter, Alice, made the presentation speech. George, son of Deacon George Goodwin, received it.

A change to piano practice seemed advisable and the cabinet organ is exchanged for a big square Chickering which took up a good portion of the parlor. My teacher was Miss Agnes Garvan, daughter of Senator Patrick Garvan. She had recently returned from studying in Paris. I continued piano with Mr. Nathan H. Allen, organist at the Center Church, Hartford, and soon changed to pipe organ study.



These were years full of new experiences. I finished my study at Mr. Bowman's private school on Burnside Avenue and wrote the editorial for the school paper. Botany, I discovered, was my favorite hobby. I had my first organ lesson, practicing at home on the piano with full scale



pedal attachment, to train the feet to play the foundation score of organ music.

During this period I was office and errand boy for the family, collecting rents in East Hartford and Manchester, generally walking both ways in order to note the flora of the wayside or along the railroad tracks. Once on the way I visited Mr. Olcott's Grass Garden in Manchester; he had recently written a letter to the *Courant* mentioning his "three troublesome chickweeds". Mr. Olcott was of English descent and when informed that one of the chickweeds was an English speedwell, an introduced plant and invader of lawns, he was somewhat surprised, but agreed with me most heartily "an English weed".

With Henry B. Hale's Orchestra, Memorial Day evening services at the First Church, I substituted for Denslow King of Thompsonville, then organist of the church and supervisor of music in Enfield public schools for thirty-five years. I noted that I had twenty in the choir. Maybe that was more than usual.

Thanksgiving Service: substituted for Henry Dike Sleeper, organist at the First Church, who was a graduate of Harvard in 1891. He wrote the first book of Harvard songs during his freshman year and for 26 years was on the staff of Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts. The Class of 1908 established a musical professorship in tribute to his service.

## 1896

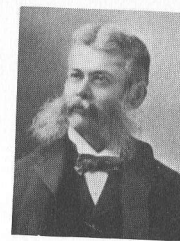
I was appointed organist at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in South Manchester and played the Easter Service. It was the first time I had ever been in an Episcopal Church. On my right hand was the assistant organist, coaching me on the order of the service. It was an experience I have never forgotten.



On Sunday April 16, 1899 I was organist at the First Congregational Church, East Hartford. On that day there was a Memorial Address given by the Rev. Dr. Leonard W. Bacon of Norwich, Connecticut for the late Henry L. Goodwin of East Hartford. There was no forenoon service at the church. Mr. Robert S. Olmsted sang "Crossing the Bar" Tenneyson-Shelley and the organ music included arrangements from Dvorak's Largo and Beethoven's Sonata Pathetique.

I note the tragic death of President McKinley by assassination September 14, 1901.

I finished my organ studies with the well known organist and choir director, Nathan H. Allen.



My musical experience broadened with Congregational church work in Torrington, South Manchester and Stamford and for a short time at the South Methodist Church, Manchester. There were organ recitals in Cheney Hall, with pupil recitals and musicals, and, in addition, I enjoyed training singers for church work as the opportunity was afforded.

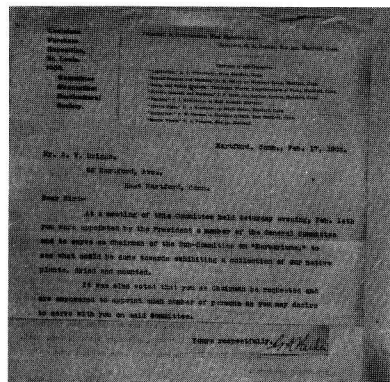
Soon after the Christmas season of 1902, my engagement to Alice May Williams of East Hartford was announced.

Father was building Mr. Horace J. Wickham's house at Woodland; the progress on the house fascinated me. It required a walk from Burnside but that was natural with botanizing.

## 1903

I took a rest from church work; it was my wedding year and a new house was being built for us by my father from my suggested plans. The forenoons were spent helping in every way, so that it would be ready when we returned from our wedding trip. Father's woodworking shop was close by giving me excellent opportunity for occasional cabinet work for myself.

For five years I had been collecting the flora of the State for an herbarium. A member of the Hartford Scientific Society, I became well acquainted with members of the Horticultural Society.

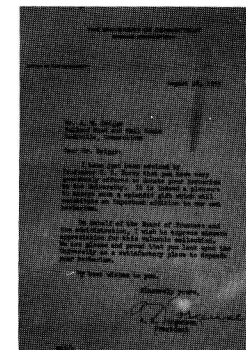


The St. Louis Exhibition was soon to be opened; the above Society asked me if I would make an herbarium exhibit of the State flora at the Exhibition. This was a novel and exciting experience, but not very compensative. It went to St. Louis, was returned, and is now at Trinity College. I was ably assisted by C. Alfred Weatherby, later of the Gray Herbarium, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and many other collectors, interested in the flora of the State.

#### 1904

According to the diary of David L. Williams, this January 5 was the coldest morning in sixty-nine years in the Connecticut Valley. That record of 29 below zero still stands, as of January 5, 1964. The frost was four feet deep and the town's water mains froze on Tolland Street. Professor Henry A. Perkins of Hartford, writing to the *Courant* in 1943 concerning the present cold weather mentioned the winter of 1903-4, saying mercury-wise it was the lowest he had experienced.

Along the byways I was still botanizing and with the advent of the automobile my collections continued to the mountains of northern New England and Nova Scotia, where the change to Arctic flora becomes noticeable. These collections were presented to the University of Connecticut.



This being the year of "expectation" and a family man, I accepted all means to add to my income. St. Mary's Parish wished me to resume duties as choir director of the church which I accepted with pleasure and continued in that position for seven years.

My study of the flora of New England has continued for twenty-five years and has involved the strenuous work of climbing mountains, scouting swamps and following brooks. I began to pursue another line of work resulting from my wife's interest in revolutionary lines among her friends and the genealogical work of her aunt, Miss. Maria Williams of East Hartford and that of her uncle Edwin P. Auger of Middletown, compiler of the Auger Genealogy. I found myself helping prospective applicants for the D.A.R. and occasionally establishing a Mayflower line.

#### 1912-1920

Two church services on Sunday and a growing family made a full week of family attention for wife and we both agreed that one service would be appreciated by both of us. The position of organist at the Center Church, Manchester was open, was accepted, and added four more years to my service as an unappointed "Minister of Music".

Easter Sunday of April 1915 was unusual with seven inches of snow and drifts of three feet. It delayed the trolley line schedule and the time for my appearance on the organ bench was very close.

At the close of 1916, an organist for twenty years, I began to realize that I was losing interest both in church work and teaching. Theaters were installing organs far more modern than most church organs. The jazz