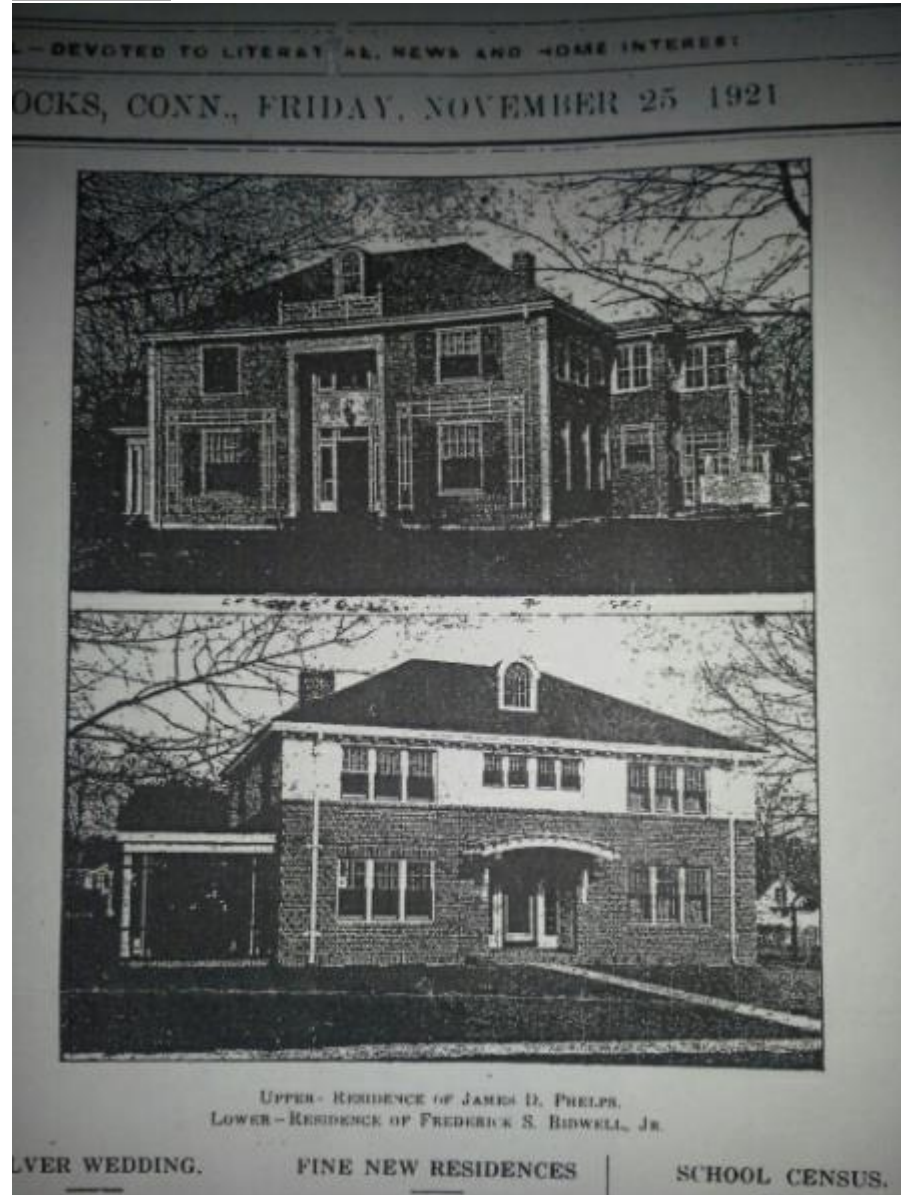


55 Church Street – A Classic Windsor Locks Home

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By Laurie Colli Amos

Frederick S. Bidwell, Jr. was born in Enfield on 12 November 1878 to Frederick S. and Annie (Steele) Bidwell, who died the day after giving birth to Frederick, Jr. Frederick, Sr. was born in Hartford, but grew up in Stafford Springs and moved to Thompsonville, and worked with his uncle, Theodore Pease, as part of Pease & Sons. Theodore Pease bought the H. C. Douglas & Co. in Windsor Locks and made his nephew the manager. Frederick Sr., bought the company from his uncle and operated it by himself until 1900, when J. D. Phelps became a partner in the company. By 24 June 1900 Frederick, Jr. was working as a bookkeeper for his father. In 1909 Frederick, Jr. was made a partner and in 1916 the business became incorporated as F. S. Bidwell Company.

About 1900 Frederick Jr. married Mabel Prohett and despite being a partner at the lumber company in Windsor Locks, Frederick Jr. lived in Suffield with his wife Mabel in 1910 and about 1912 Mabel gave birth to their son Frederick. Frederick Jr. and his family continued to live in Suffield until their house on Church Street was completed. In 1930 Frederick, Jr. was the treasurer of the F. S. Bidwell Company, while his neighbor James D. Phelps, who had built 59 Church Street at the same time that Frederick built his house, was the President of the company. At this time Frederick's house was valued \$25,000.

In 1937 the Bidwell Memorial association, whose members descend from John Bidwell, a tanner who came with Rev. Thomas Hooker to Connecticut, held its first ever business meeting and dinner in Windsor Locks at the homes of Frederick S. and Lawrence K. Bidwell on Church Street. After the business meeting the 75 members in attendance had a dinner that was served on Frederick and Lawrence's backyards. Frederick became the president of F. S. Bidwell Company after James Deforest Phelps, who had been President, died on 8 January 1932, but before 8 April 1940. Despite being valued at \$25,000 ten years earlier, Frederick's house was only worth \$15,000 on 8 April 1940.

Frederick continued to serve as president of F. S. Bidwell Company until his retirement in 1950. Not only had he worked at the lumber company but had been president of the Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club, had been the treasurer of the Windsor Locks Savings and Loan Association, and had been a master of the Euclid Lodge of Masons. Frederick died on 9 February 1965 at a local convalescent home. Mabel Bidwell died on 10 July 1965 in Windsor).

It is at this point in the history of 55 Church Street that my family comes in. My parents, George and Elaine Colli, bought the house from the Estate of Bidwells. Over the course of my parent's ownership of the house they made some changes to it. They removed the dumbwaiter, changed the wallpaper and rugs, updated the electrical and plumbing, and remodeled the kitchen, but left the bathrooms as they were. They also converted the large master suite into two bedrooms and added the family room to the back of the house. It really was a great house to grow up in.