

H. E. Remington, Clothier

By Jamie Eves • April 26, 2025

Homer Remington: Successful Gilded Age Small Town Merchant



The Mill Museum periodically posts a “What Is It?” quiz on Facebook, where a photo or photos of some “mystery object” are published and readers are invited to give their opinions about what they could be. A recent “What Is It?” post featured several photos of the vintage pants hanger, above. The object was a hanger for pants or trousers. Pants or trousers were hung upside down, with the cuffs at the top held by the clip design of the hanger, thus preserving the pressing and crease without adding a wrinkle at the knees. On one side of the hanger is printed: “WE TRADE AT THE H. E. REMINGTON CO. WILLIMANTIC, CONN.” On the reverse side is printed: THE Acme Hanger. MADE IN U.S.A.” Customers purchasing trousers at the Remington Company would receive the hanger free with the purchase of a pair of trousers. According to the 1921 Willimantic street directory, the H. E. Remington Company was a retail clothier located at 766 Main Street in Willimantic (later the home of Zeising Brothers bookstore and even later abandoned and demolished in 2024). The building was known for its elegant wrought or cast iron facade, and for many years was considered a symbol of Victorian Willimantic. The president of the Remington Company was Homer E. Remington, whose home (the street directory informs us) was at 176 Prospect Street in Willimantic (still standing). It is worth finding out more about Remington and his business, for many years a mainstay of Willimantic’s once-thriving Main Street.

According to <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/79164802/homer-remington> Homer Remington was (and still is, one assumes) buried in the Old Willimantic Cemetery. His gravestone says he was born in 1853 and died in 1927. He married Sarah Gertrude Babcock Remington (1855-1947). His parents were Joel Remington (1818-1891) and Armina M. Hall Remington (1816-1871). Ada Remington Miller (1879-1946) and Maude Remington Korper (1881-1933) were his children.

According to an article reprinted at

https://www.rockvillemama.com/ctbios/tw_bios/r15.htm, transcribed by

Linda D. Pingel, "Homer Ernest Remington & the Babcock Family Biography,"

originally printed in the book *Commemorative Biographical Record of*

Tolland and Windham Counties, Connecticut: Biographical Sketches of

Prominent and Represeantaive Citizens and of Many of the Early Settled

Families (Chicago: J. H. Beers & Co., 1903), pp. 1166 – 1167:

“Homer Ernest Remington, one of the foremost and representative merchants of Willimantic, Windham County, is secretary, treasurer and manager of the corporation of the H. E. Remington Co., one of the most substantial retail houses of the city. Mr. Remington has risen from most modest and humble beginnings to his present enviable standing by the sole force of his personality. Though devoted to business, he has yielded to his friends and has filled positions of honor and trust, with credit to himself and satisfaction to his constituents, who are not confined to any one party or organization. Mr. Remington descends from old and honorable New England stock, through both maternal and paternal ancestry.”

“Homer E. Remington was born Feb. 7, 1853, in Waterbury, Vt., son of Joel and Armina (Hall) Remington. His father was a son of Jonathan Remington, and his mother a daughter of Lyman Hall. Both families have been long established there, the Halls coming from Wallingford, Conn., to Vermont in an early day, and making their home at Waterbury. Jonathan Remington, who is mentioned above, was a farmer, and all his family have now passed away. Joel Remington, the father of Homer E., was born at Huntington, Vt., where he was reared to farming life, in which he was successful. He died at the age of seventy-two, and was buried at Waterbury, where the greater part of his life was spent. He married Mrs. Armina (Hall) Bowen, who died at the age of fifty-four, and was buried at Waterbury.”

“Homer Ernest Remington was the only child of his parents. He had a half brother, Azariah, born to his mother’s first marriage, [but] who took the name of Remington, ... who is now deceased. Joel Remington and his wife were excellent Christian people, of the highest character and the strictest integrity.”

“Homer Ernest Remington spent his boyhood on the farm, and was raised to a full knowledge of hard work. His education was obtained in the public schools, and a seminary at Montpelier, Vt. His schooling was over at the age of sixteen years, when he took a position as a clerk in a general store at Waterbury, Vt. After spending some three years there, the young clerk went to St. Albans to take a place in a wholesale flour and feed store, where he was mainly employed in bookkeeping.”

So far, a typical Yankee story of the Market Revolution, the transition from an agricultural to a commercial economy, and success over several generations. A generation of frontier farmers produced a second generation of more prosperous farmers, which produced a third generation that — well educated, possibly with some family capital and contacts through church circles — left the farm and sought a job in small business.

“In the course of a few months he was induced to give up this work and take a clerkship at Norwich, Conn., in a clothing store, owned by John R. Foster and F.A. Wells, Mr. Foster having established a chain of stores under the name of the Foster Syndicate. Mr. Wells was a brother-in-law of Mr. Foster, and lived at one time at Waterbury, and where both had known Mr. Remington. After about a year in Norwich Mr. Remington came to Willimantic to clerk for W.L. Harrington & Co., Mr. Wells being associated with Mr. Harrington. In 1875 Mr. Remington became the manager of their Willimantic store, and in 1876 the firm of H.E. Remington & Co. was formed, Mr. Remington being the practical head of the establishment. This firm was succeeded by the incorporated company known as the H.E. Remington Co., of which Mr. Remington is secretary, treasurer and manager, which responsible position he fills with satisfaction to the other members of the corporation, and to the material prosperity of the business.”

The years after the Civil War were good for business. The Market Revolution, begun in the early 1800s, took off. Bright young men with educations and contacts — especially if they were good with figures — could find jobs as clerks in an ever-growing number of retail establishments, especially if they were willing to leave small-town life behind and strike out for the city. Where once Connecticut’s surplus farm population migrated north to the Vermont frontier, now Vermont’s surplus farm population moved back to Connecticut, looking for jobs in commerce, business, or industry. For ambitious, hard-working, New England-born, English-speaking, well-educated, Congregationalist Yankee men, there were plentiful opportunities for upward mobility. Remington took advantage of the burgeoning Gilded Age economy. Remington clearly was not rich, but he had advantages that most immigrants and even young Yankee women lacked, and he made good use of them.

The book continues.

“Mr. Remington was married Aug. 20, 1878, to Miss S. Gertrude Babcock, of Coventry, Conn., daughter of Norman L. and Sarah (Spencer) Babcock, and a descendant of Jonathan Babcock, who was the common ancestor of both the Coventry and Mansfield Babcocks, and is supposed to have been the second permanent settler in that part of Windham, now included in Willimantic. He bought land in that part of the town in 1709. He is supposed to have been a descendant of Robert Babcock, of Dorchester, Mass. Mary, the first wife of Jonathan Babcock, died in 1719, and he was married in the same year to Mary Hebard. Mr. Babcock died in 1731, in Coventry, where several of his children had settled. Ebenezer Babcock, son of the foregoing Jonathan, was born about 1699, and married Mary Burgess, of Yarmouth, for his first wife. She died in Windham about 1723, and he was married in 1725 to Mehitable Burt. His last years were passed in Coventry, where he died in 1773, leaving many descendants. Robert Babcock, son of Ebenezer, was born in 1732, was married in 1753 to Jedidah Turner, and lived in Coventry, where their son, Gideon Babcock, who was born in 1754, married Tryphena, daughter of Elisha Babcock. They made their home in Coventry. Elijah Babcock, son of Gideon, was born Dec. 14, 1798, and was married March 26, 1822, to Mary Ann Strong. They resided in Coventry. Their children were: (1) Norman Leander, born April 27, 1823, died March 29, 1890. He was twice married, first to Sarah Spencer, of Mansfield, Conn., and second to Maria Bliven, of Willimantic, Conn. (2) Charles, born March 13, 1826, married Eliza Lathrop, and went to Pikes Peak. (3) Julia, born Feb. 10, 1828, died April 1, 1899. She married Henrie Crandall and lived in Providence, R.I. (4) Austania, born Oct. 13, 1833, was a teacher in Providence, R.I., and died in August, 1865. (5) Alonzo, born Feb. 20, 1838, died Jan. 31, 1903. He went to Pikes Peak when quite young and married. (6) Francis Leroy, born July 29, 1845, was a soldier in the 21st Conn. V.I. Norman Leander Babcock, son of Elijah, was born in Coventry. He was twice married, as stated above. His children by his first wife were: (1) Walter Spencer, born May 28, 1853, died Oct. 11, 1888. He married in the West. (2) S. Gertrude, born Dec. 6, 1855, married Homer E. Remington, and resides in Willimantic, Conn. By the second wife was born, Fannie Maria,

born July 8, 1860, who married John L. Leonard, and resides in Willimantic, Connecticut.”

In other words, Remington married well.

“To the marriage of Mr. And Mrs. Remington have been born the following family: Ada, a graduate of the Willimantic high school; Maud, a graduate of the Willimantic high school, 1901, and now a student at the Normal School; and Gertrude, who died at the age of six years.”

Remington’s success in business presaged equal success in politics. Indeed, in the Gilded Age, the two often went hand-in-hand.

“Mr. Remington first voted in Willimantic, and is a staunch Republican. In 1893 he represented Willimantic in the General Assembly, where he served on the committee on Insurance. For several years he was treasurer of the Water Fund of Willimantic.”

Remington joined several social clubs, which at that time were avenues for advancement for ambitious men hankering for economic success.

“He has been admitted to the various Masonic bodies of Willimantic, and has taken the Templar’s degree, belonging to St. John’s Commandery. He was a charter member of Obwebetuck Lodge, No. 16, I.O.O.F., at Willimantic.”

“As one of the safe and careful business men of Willimantic, Mr. Remington has a most enviable standing, and his family is as prominent in the social as he is in the commercial circles of the place.”

Remington had a modest home on Prospect Street in Willimantic, shown below. It is still standing. His clothing store on Main Street was located in what later would be known as the Zeising Brothers building — alas, demolished only last year!

That's a lot of history to be packed in one small hanger! The hanger is currently on display in the Mill Workers' bedroom exhibit room at the Mill Museum.

