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10 ALBUM, Chronicle, Saturday, December 29, 2001

— HISTORY —

# The end of Hurley's marks the end of an era in downtown retailing

*Part three of three*

On Feb. 14, 1968, a destructive fire changed Willimantic's appearance forever. It raged through the Sherwin-Williams paint store and destroyed the historic Commercial Block, erected by Allen Lincoln and Edwin Buck more than a century before. The fire also gutted Hurley's Prep Shop and Lincoln Shop, and the company made the decision to move into Hugh Clark Murray's now vacant Boston Store building.

Hurley's Boys Shop, later known as the Prep Shop was opened in 1924 at 700 Main St. in the Union Block located on the south side of Lincoln Square. The proprietors, J. Edmund and Verna M. Hurley, had worked in the Church-Reed clothing store across the road.

In 1945, three young men who had worked at Hurley's whilst at high school purchased the store and continued to trade under the

Hurley's name. Arthur H. Loiselle, president, Earl W. McSweeney, treasurer, and George W. Frasier Jr. expanded the business into three stores.



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In 1955 they opened Hurley's Men Shop at 684 Main St. and in 1964 opened the Lincoln Store at 661 Main St. next to the Baptist Church. In 1966 Hurley's Prep Shop moved across the road to 677 Main St. and just two years later the Prep and Lincoln Stores were badly damaged in the St. Valentine's Day fire.

The current owner of Hurley's, Dick Anthony, is probably one of the most well known figures in Willimantic. He was born in the city on Dec. 12, 1931, the son of George Anthony, a paymaster at

American Thread Co. On leaving high school, Dick briefly worked at Clark's Restaurant before starting at Hurley's.

In 1964, he was made manager of the new Lincoln Shop at 661 Main, and in 1968 became a partner in the company when the three stores, Hurley's Prep Shop, Hurley's Mens Shop and the Lincoln Shop, relocated to the Boston Store building. Hurley's purchased the building from the estate of Joseph B. Riordan, then administered by Riordan's three daughters, Mary Boucher, Lucy Keon and Margaret Lacourse. Dick Anthony eventually purchased the building and business in 1986.

Hurley's has been providing old-fashioned, "Are You Being Served" service to customers in the historic Murray block for more than 33 years. Longevity is a distinct theme of the history of the H. C. Murray Co. and Hurley's. The former served the region



Hurley's, lower center, was left gutted after the 1968 Valentine's Day fire.

from 1879 until 1967, and Hurley's provided men and boys clothes from 1924 until 2001.

Dick Anthony has 51 years service. Richard Boardman has been at Hurley's since 1961 and Barbara McSweeney, Earl's

widow, has been at Hurley's for a mere 57 years.

We'll all miss Hurley's. Let's hope that the magnificent department store on the corner of Main and Church is not demolished for a parking lot.

## Looking back: 125 years of the Chronicle

### 125 years ago this week

On Jan. 4, 1877, the very first issue of the *Willimantic Enterprise*, which evolved into the *Chronicle*, was published. It was a weekly paper.

**In the news:** "Main Street is a dangerous place because it is monopolized nearly every other day by the owners of fast or would be horses."

"It is supposed that a noon train is going to be added between Willimantic and Hartford. It is very much needed."

Felt Hats at \$1.00.

Dandruff Care.

### 100 years ago

Jan. 4, 1902, the paper, by then known as *The Willimantic Chronicle*, became the *Willimantic Daily Chronicle*.

**In the news:** "Herman Bastein, of Danielson was brought before Justice G.W. Baker in the hall at Wauregan, Friday afternoon, on two counts: keeping (alcohol) with intent to sell and actual sale. He was found guilty and fined for each count making the total, \$109.31."

### 75 years ago

**In the news:** "At the annual meeting of the Mansfield Center Congregational Church held Friday evening, an increase of three hundred dollars was unanimously voted to the salaries of Rev. T. Hawthorne Jones and Mrs. Florence Jones. Their combined annual salaries will now amount to \$1,500."

"The population of the state has been placed at 1,586,435."

**Advertisement:** "SPECIALS at Windham's Live Store. Telephone

### 50 years ago

**In the news:** "Children at the Horace W. Porter school were mighty blue today as their friend Mrs. Louise Wiley, who has planned their lunches, arranged parties for them and had time and interest for each one personally, was not there as it had been hoped she would be after her vacation. Mrs. Wiley had undergone major surgery and must have a long period to recover."

**Advertisement:** "Going out of business sale;" Barnufsky's Shoe Store located on Jackson Street; prices varying from .39 to \$5.00 a

*Chronicle.*

**In the news:** Coffee drinkers around the nation outraged by rising prices, which have reached \$3 per pound, are beginning to boycott, but in this area, residents have apparently refused to turn to substitutes for their favorite drink.

"The (Willington) Board of Selectmen is going to the Board of Finance with a request to borrow "up to \$4,000" to pay for the town's portion of a federally subsidized road sign program."

**Advertisement:** "Where did all of those bright yellow newspaper tubes come from?" To better serv-