

History

A fine house on Summit, and a newspaper begins

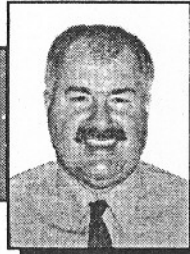
Part one of three

John A. McDonald (1857-1904), the founder of the *Willimantic Chronicle*, built a fine Victorian house on the northeast corner of Summit and North streets in 1892, just as Summit street was being developed eastward to connect with Jackson Street.

McDonald had trained at the Windham Transcript in Danielson as a newspaperman, and subsequently relocated to New Canaan to work as a foreman in a small printing shop.

He briefly returned to Danielson and worked at the Transcript, and in 1876 McDonald arrived in Willimantic to work for printer Charles Crandall. In 1879, McDonald entered into partnership with Fayette Safford, who was publishing and printing a local weekly newspaper, the Willimantic Enterprise, in the basement of the Franklin Hall on Main Street. In December 1879 the paper was enlarged and the name changed to the *Willimantic Chronicle*. The printing presses were relocated to a building on Union Street, owned by Horace Hall. The paper was produced there until 1887, when McDonald formed the Chronicle Printing Co. and built new premises at 10 Church St.

In 1891, the *Willimantic Chronicle* became a daily paper, and the company prospered. McDonald



Tom Beardsley

did much writing for the *Chronicle*, and was involved in community affairs and in state and local politics until his health began to fail.

He collapsed and died of pulmonary hemorrhage in the Chronicle building on Dec. 9, 1904. He was only 47. McDonald had married Vera A. Bartlett in 1888, and his stepson, George A. Bartlett (1873-1919) took over the reigns at the *Chronicle* and became the newspaper's business manager.

Jesse F. Church, the president of the Willimantic Gas and Electric Co., rented the McDonald house at 175 Summit in 1902 and 1903.

The house at 175 Summit was a part of a large estate deeded to Vera A. McDonald after her husband's death. From 1905 until 1910, Cora Reilly a district nurse, rented rooms in the house. In 1910 she shared the house with George Clark, a clerk in the A. D. Spellman meat market at 27

Church St.

On Feb. 14, 1918, Vera A. McDonald deeded four pieces of land, including 175 Summit St., to her son, George A. Bartlett. However, McDonald's son died a year later in St. Joseph Hospital, aged only 45, from meningitis.

He was born in Willimantic on June 1, 1873, the son of George and Vera A. (Snow) Bartlett. His father died in 1881, and his mother subsequently married John A. McDonald.

George Bartlett had begun work as a boy in the new Chronicle buildings on Church Street in 1888. He had learnt the printer's trade, and trained on the job in reporting and business administration.

Frank W. Clapp rented 175 Summit St. from the Bartlett estate between 1919 and 1921, David Nichols, a local carpenter and builder, subsequently purchased 175 Summit St. from the Bartlett estate on Jan. 12, 1921. He occupied it for two years, and on July 3, 1923 he sold it to Eva B. Lewis. She did not live in the house, but rented it. Eva Lewis sold 175 Summit St. to Charles Wesley Hill on April 15, 1926.

He lived in the house for the next 58 years.

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George A. Bartlett (1873-1919), the grandfather of the current president of the *Chronicle*, Lucy Bartlett Crosbie, was the third owner of the house at 175 Summit St.

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