

A Family Affair

May 20, 1880. A.L. Graves, a co-proprietor of the *Summerside Journal* for nearly a decade, quits the enterprise, placing it all in the hands of one man: William Arthur Brennan. And in Brennan hands it would stay for almost a century.

“W.A.” is a figure we’ve often discussed. Born in May 1851 in Louisville, Kentucky to Joseph Fletcher Brennan and Angeline Williamson, he first came to the Island in 1861. With war erupting in the United States, Joseph sent W.A. and his younger brother, Alfred, to St. Dunstan’s College in Charlottetown. Here they were educated until 1865, when they returned to their father, now in Ohio. At this time, W.A. entered into the printing trade, learning the craft at his father’s publication company in Cincinnati.

Returning to the Island in the early 1870s along with his father, W.A. began his career in journalism at the offices of the *Islander*, which had been purchased by the elder Brennan.

He soon relocated to Summerside, where he worked his way into the *Journal*, becoming co-proprietor alongside Graves. He married Rosara Lefurgey, daughter of the Hon. John Lefurgey of Summerside, in 1882, with whom he had three children.

Known as a “progressivist”, W.A. immersed himself in community life. He promoted agriculture, notably through the *Journal*’s sister paper the *Agriculturalist*, and was a proponent of scientific intensive farming. His untimely death in January 1916 at the age of 66 was widely lamented.

The family business then fell to his eldest son, Arthur Roland. Born in September 1882, “A.R.” was reared in the printing world, destined to succeed his father. After receiving his education in Summerside and Phillips Academy in Massachusetts, he was brought into the *Journal* in the early 1900s. At this time, W.A. formed the Journal Publishing Co. and set up A.R. as its secretary-treasurer, a capacity in which he would serve until service of a different sort came calling.

In May 1915, A.R. signed on as an officer with the 6th Canadian Mounted Rifles, and spent the next three years as an instructor in Halifax. In August 1918, he volunteered for an overseas stint as a draft conducting officer but sickness upon his arrival in England soon had him discharged to Canada.

A.R. married Florence Alward and their first child, William Roland, was born in December 1914; John Robert and Charles Arthur followed in the early 1920s.

The family business continued to prosper under A.R.'s tenure throughout the '20s, '30, and '40s. But in 1942, the family's matriarch, Rosara, died; in addition, A.R. and Florence lost both John and Charles to the ravages of WWII.

After 35 years at the helm, A.R. passed away in June 1951 during a crucial stage in the *Journal's* history. That October, it would join forces with its long-time competition, the *Pioneer*, an amalgamation presided over by his eldest son, William ("Bill").

After earning a degree in electrical engineering in 1939, and serving with both the RCAF and RAF during WWII, Bill worked for a year at the *Journal* before accepting an appointment to the Public Utilities Commission and relocating to Charlottetown. Despite this, he succeeded his father as President of the Journal Publishing Co., and although he was not active in the day-to-day operations of the enterprise, he remained involved in all major policy decisions.

The Brennan association with the *Summerside Journal/Journal-Pioneer* ended in 1972 with the purchase of the paper by the Sterling Group; however, an indelible mark spanning three generations had been left, one that will never be erased.