

## BUFFALO NEWSPAPERS SINCE 1870

by A. Gordon Bennett

On the last day of December, 1813, the British slipped cross the river from Fort Erie and burned Buffalo.

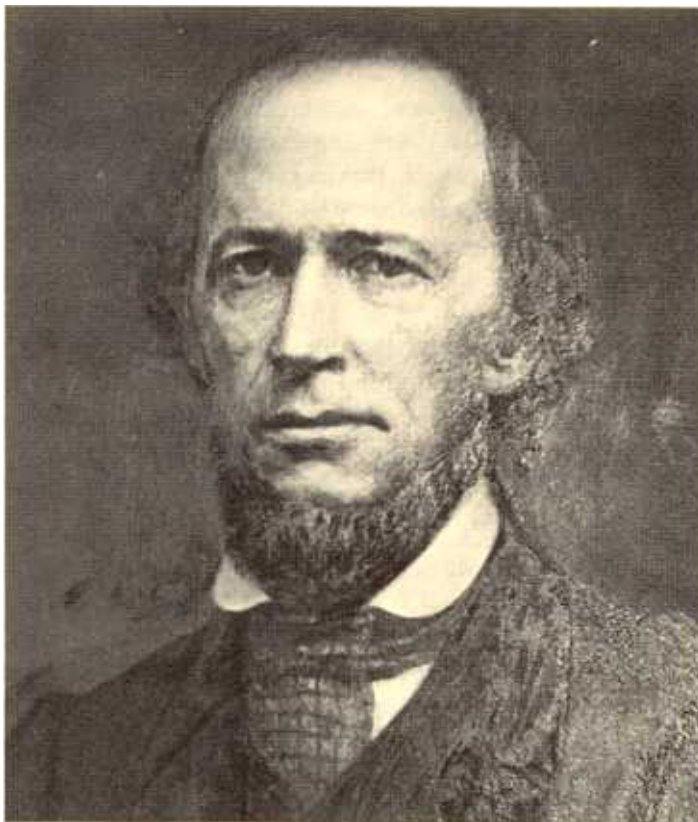
Hezekiah Salisbury and his brother Smith, the village printers, must have seen the attack coming, for they were able to haul their printing press to safety at Harris Hill near Clarence, N.Y. After the war they came back, starting up their job-printing plant again and resuming publication of their *Buffalo Gazette*, which had first appeared in 1811—Buffalo's first newspaper. It was published "occasionally," later becoming a weekly, but never a daily.

The Salisbury family name is prominent in several early Buffalo publications, as is the name of Bradford Manchester, who came here as a youth to learn the printing trade in Salisbury's shop. Weekly and monthly publication was the rule in these early years. News was gathered by word of mouth. Rarely was more than one man involved in the whole process of reporting, writing, selling advertising, setting type, and finally printing the single-sheet newspaper. Presses were hand operated, but fortunately few copies of a paper were needed in the small village.

Buffalo's growth was slow because the Great Falls at Niagara shut the area to easy access by water. The opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, with its western terminus at Buffalo, changed the tempo of growth. The sleepy town came awake. Buffalo embarked on the long trip to becoming the Queen City of the Lakes, a great center where ships and railroads would meet to transfer cargoes between East and West.

Several weekly newspapers came and went during these years, but the city's first daily appeared when James Faxon, a newcomer to Buffalo in 1831, bought the weekly *Buffalo Bulletin* from Horace Steele, who had launched it in 1830. Faxon changed its name to *Western Star* and published it daily, beginning July 1, 1834. From this paper evolved *The Buffalo Courier*, now the *Courier-Express*.

By 1914 and the outbreak of the First World War, Buffalo readers had a choice of six English-language daily newspapers. In the morning: the *Courier* and the *Express*; in the evening: the *News*, *Times*, *Enquirer*, and *Commercial*. Of these, two survive: the morning and Sunday *Courier-Express* and the six-day *Evening News*.



*Bradford Manchester*

Bradford Manchester brought the first steam-powered press to Buffalo in 1838, quadrupling hand production. In 1845, he bought the first cylinder press. In the meantime, Nathan Lyman had established the first type foundry in 1835. Another development was the first stereotyping plant, started by Jewett, Thomas & Co. in 1846.

Under the headline AMAZING EVENT the papers told of the first telegraph message to reach Buffalo . . . it came from Albany, Friday, July 3, 1846, having been brought by boat from New York, which had no wire to Albany.

January 1, 1835, the *Daily Commercial Advertiser* was issued from the office of the *Buffalo Patriot* by H.A. Salisbury, Guy H. Salisbury, a nephew, was editor, B. A. Manchester, printer. Later, Dr. Thomas M. Foote, a medical doctor who had deserted medicine for journalism, became editor. A friend of Millard Fillmore, he once served as a diplomat in the Court of Vienna.

The paper's name was changed in 1839 to *Commercial Advertiser & Journal*, published by E. R. Jewett & Co.

In 1861, the *Commercial* was purchased by James D. Warren and two partners. Warren, a native of Wyoming County, had moved to Clarence, New York, as a child. Always interested in politics, he represented Clarence on the Erie County Board of Supervisors, and at 31 years of age was elected County Treasurer. Subsequently, he served several terms as clerk of the Board. Some years later, James N. Matthews became his partner in the *Commercial*, but in 1877, they separated, Mr. Warren becoming sole owner, and Matthews buying the *Express*. Warren's local Republican leadership brought added prestige to the *Commercial*, which continued with its conservative editing, specializing in business, legal, financial and political news. Legal advertising, much of it government controlled, was a good source of revenue, and all the papers competed for it. J. D. Warren's influence helped.

William C. Warren succeeded to the proprietorship in 1894 after the death of his father in 1886, and brother in 1892. Born in Buffalo in 1859, he joined the paper after graduation from college in 1880. Thus, he brought fourteen years of experience to his responsibilities as publisher.

William C. Warren was so active in Republican politics that it was said that he ran the Erie County GOP from his office at the paper. Often opposed by the other stalwart Republican papers, the *Express* and the *News*, he dropped from politics after he was beaten by East Side political bosses in 1906.

The entry onto the Buffalo scene of the *News*, *Times*, and *Enquirer* during the last twenty years of the 19th century began to erode the *Commercial* dominance of the evening field, but Warren would not change the staid old *Commercial* to compete with the lively, feature-filled other three. Circulation continued to fall, but the city was nevertheless taken by surprise when Warren sold the paper to Charles A. Finnegan in 1917.

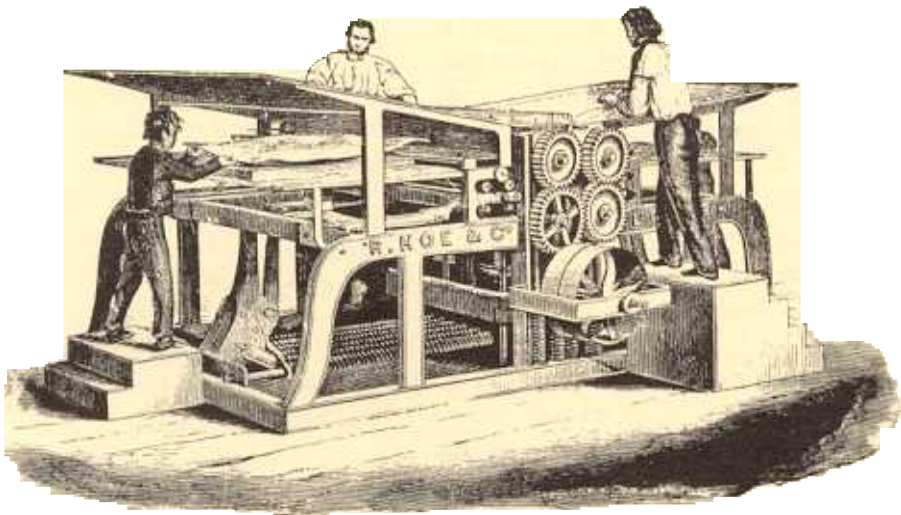
Finnegan, a native of Louisville, had come to Buffalo in 1909. A shrewd business man, he has been called a "glorified junk dealer" because of his ability to buy defunct companies and sell the equipment at a profit. He is reputed to have sold a local brewery's tanks for more than the brewery cost, and, similarly, the rails of an abandoned railroad.

Finnegan gave the *Commercial* a face lift in a effort to recapture the readers, but after eight years he gave up. Labor disputes plagued him . . . he fought and broke a strike by union printers . . . but pickets around his plant for a year hurt the image of the paper with the working man. He left

a unique mark on the record when the *Commercial* alone, among Buffalo papers, resisted publication of the “false armistice” announced several days before the authentic word on November 11, 1918 by United Press. The *Commercial* used only the Associated Press which didn’t carry the report. In 1924, Finnegan sold the paper to “undisclosed investors.” Two years later it disappeared.

Printing technology made rapid advances in the 1880’s and 1890’s. Rotary presses, curved stereotype plates, and finally Mergenthaler’s linotype machine, made possible speedy production of large circulations. Improved engraving processes brought increased use of illustrations, and the coming of electric power was further frosting on the cake.

Foreign language papers appeared early in Buffalo. The German *Demokrat* began about 1850, but by 1890 its publisher, William B. Held, could see his readers melting away as a new generation turned to a new language. He decided to invade the evening field, so solidly held by the *News*, *Times*, and *Commercial*. His first edition of the *Enquirer*, issued from 509 Main Street on April 9, 1891, carried stories headed “McKinley to run for Governor of Ohio,” “A Salary Grab in Lockport,” “Train Robber Arrested in Mobile, Ala.,” “The Weather Forecast of Rain and Warmer.” Competition was hot, so hot that late in 1892 he sold the paper to E. G. S. Miller and William J. Connors, who moved the office to 250 Main Street.



*A double cylinder printing machine of the late 1800'*

William James Conners was born in Buffalo January 3, 1857, the son of Peter and Mary (Scanlan) Conners. He left school at 13 to seek employment on the ships and wharves near his home. This was the period of post Civil War development of Great Lakes commerce, and the docks were piled high with freight. The work was hard, but as the boy grew in age, strength, and experience, he soon attracted the attention of ship captains, whose responsibility for fast unloading and re-loading of freight meant the difference between profit and loss to ship owners.

Conners organized the casual dock gangs into well ordered groups and contracted with the captains for the work, becoming so successful that his contracting business spread to all large Great Lakes ports, and he became a power in the shipping world. As his fortune grew, he turned to other investments, but his desire to own a newspaper grew from his belief that his views on public and political matters were not receiving fair treatment in the existing papers.

A colorful man who had grown up in a hard school, he left many legends. A story is told of his being called to another port city where he found chaos on the docks. Hiring a horse and buggy, he drove into the center of the mob, picked out the likeliest looking man and shouted: "You are in charge here, name your own foremen, get all these men to work!" In minutes he had solved the problem by his judgment of men, his delegation of authority, and a display of raw courage. For many years his payroll was said to be the largest in the Port of Buffalo.

The *Enquirer* continued to struggle. In 1896, W. J. Conners assumed full control, changing it to morning publication. About this time he hired William S. Bennett as bookkeeper, starting an association that was to last forty years. Bennett had learned the printing trade as a young hand-setter of type for a commercial printer, but had switched to bookkeeping at the Union Steamboat Company, whose owners recommended him to Mr. Conners. On May 9, 1897, Mr. Conners bought the *Courier* from Charles W. McCune and changed the *Enquirer* back to the evening field.

The *Western Star*, as Buffalo's first daily in 1834, soon absorbed the *Bulletin* from Horace Steele, and the *Republican*, a weekly begun in 1828 as a Democratic paper. In 1848, William A. Seaver and Robert D. Foy bought the paper and moved it from 12 Exchange Street to 206 Washington Street and later to 7 W. Seneca Street. In 1854, Joseph Warren became joint owner with G. H. Harroun and J. H. Sanford. Warren was superintendent of Buffalo Schools and a leader in the Democratic party. The *Sunday Courier* was launched in January, 1875. Warren died in 1876, and in 1883, Charles W. McCune became sole owner.



*Old Front St. docks on Buffalo River, 1914.*

The *Enquirer* and *Courier* prospered under W. J. Conners. He became active in the Democratic party, and his feuds with Norman E. Mack, owner of the *Times*, were classics in their day. Conners was chairman of the State Democratic Committee from 1906 to 1910. Mack was chairman of the Democratic National Committee in 1908. But then their counterparts: Butler of the *News*, Matthews of the *Express*, and Warren of the *Commercial*, did not always see eye to eye on the Republican side. Conners' and Mack's printed attacks made lively reading. These were exciting days for the newspapers, the people's only source of news. "Extra Editions" were issued to accommodate late-breaking news, and on crisp November election nights newspaperboys ran through the streets hawking "Extra paper!" often receiving five and ten times the price of the 1 cent paper from excited buyers. Large election night crowds gathered in the streets in front of the newspaper offices to read the results marked on big bulletin boards erected for the occasion.

In 1916, W. J. Conners organized the Great Lakes Transit Corporation, which eventually owned 85% of the package freight ships on the Great Lakes. The line also owned three large passenger ships serving all Lake Ports from Buffalo and Chicago to Duluth.

Charles Bennett Smith was editor of the *Courier* in the early 1900's. He was later elected to Congress. Subsequently, David S. Taylor ran the news side like a tyrant, changing staff members regularly. W. S. Bennett had become business manager. William J. Conners, Jr. joined the newspaper upon his discharge from the Navy Flying Corps in December, 1918. After graduating from Yale University in 1917, he had enlisted in military service immediately. Mr. Conners, Sr. was involved in road building and real estate in Florida at this time, and his son took over direction of the *Courier* and *Enquirer*.

Radio news had just begun to take the edge off the printed word at this time when the *Courier* and the *Express* found themselves sharing equally 100,000 readers. The Sunday *Courier* was running ahead of the *Times* and the *Express*, but the evening papers, the *News* and the *Times* were circulating over 100,000 each. So it was that economics brought together the arch Democratic *Courier* and the arch Republican *Express* when the two papers merged into the *Courier-Express* on June 14, 1926.

W. J. Conners, Sr. acquired all the stock in the new corporation, but many *Express* staff members remained with the new paper. The *Enquirer*, which had been re-christened *Star*, and converted to tabloid size, emulating the successful New York *News*, was discontinued, leaving the evening field to the *News* and the *Times*.

W. J. Conners, Sr. was Chairman of the *Courier-Express*; W. J. Conners, Jr., publisher and President; Burrows Matthews, who had been editor of the *Express*, became Vice President and Editor; and W. S. Bennett, Secretary-Treasurer. The merger brought together two old friends — Conners, Jr. and Matthews as publisher and editor, and the success of the paper reflected their closeness.

Readers were not so easily reconciled. Newsstands folded the papers so *Courier* showed on half, *Express* on half, and purchasers continued to ask for their favorite. One observer reported that *Express* readers sat on one side of the street cars, *Courier* readers opposite. However, the paper prospered and a new building was planned at 787 Main Street, corner of Goodell.

Shortly after it was begun W. J. Conners, Sr. died on October 5, 1929, destined never to know or enjoy the "Log Cabin" retreat built into the building's top floor secretly planned by his son as a surprise.

In 1926, Mr. Conners had established the Conners Foundation “to help the people of Buffalo whose needs were not otherwise provided for.” His regard for all man is apparent in his instructions that the Foundation be administered always by six trustees, two each of the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faiths.

It was in the twenties that Billy Kelly introduced his ward, Anne McIlhenny, to writing high school sports news on the *Courier*. A champion Lafayette swimmer, she took to news writing just as she took to water. Her colorful column became a fixture in the *Courier-Express*. Later she was to become Mrs. Burrows Matthews.

Billy Kelly graduated from Old St. Joseph’s School on the Terrace and first worked on the *Courier* in 1900, but left to cover the McKinley assassination and subsequent trial and conviction of Leon Czolgosz for the American Press Association. He returned to the *Courier* in 1902 as a proof reader, joining Local #9 of the International Typographical Union, a card he carried the rest of his life.

Sports, however, were his first love, and he submitted so many stories to the editors that he was named sports editor in 1904. This was the era of sports growth in Buffalo — ABC tourneys came to the city, track and bicycle races in the Connecticut Street and Masten Ave. armories, keen high school and college football, baseball, and basketball. The local sports editors, Kelly of the *Courier*, Horace Lerch of the *Express*, Bob Stedler of the *Times*, Jim Parkes of the *News* (Karpes Comment), and Ed Tranter of the *Enquirer*, all had followers of their personal columns. Some doubled as officers in the three active Boxing Clubs: Velodrome, Crescent, and Queensbury. Such nationally known fighters as Rocky Kansas, Jimmy Goodrich, and Jimmy Slattery were developed locally in that hey-day of boxing. Kelly retired in 1950 but continued his column until his death in 1954. The Billy Kelly Awards made annually to outstanding high school athletes were established in 1956 by the *Courier-Express*.

W. J. Conners, Jr., continued to direct the newspaper during the trying days of the Depression. The building at Main and Goodell was completed under the watchful eye of Eugene C. Murphy, now business manager; and the paper moved to its new home in December 1930, where the public was invited to visit on December 13th. The Niagara Photo Engraving Company, a subsidiary, was moved into the *Courier-Express* building at this time.

In 1929, John J. Meegan joined the paper. Originally a reporter on the *Enquirer*, Meegan had become Promotion Manager of the *Courier-*

*Enquirer*, and then secretary to W. J. Conners, Sr., traveling with him to New York, Palm Beach, or wherever business called. Mr. Murphy became General Manager upon the death of W. S. Bennett in 1937, but died soon afterwards, in 1942, and Frank J. Clancy succeeded him.

The growth of the Sunday paper after the discontinuance of the *Times* in 1939 was so rapid that new equipment was purchased and unused space in the building was soon occupied. Building alterations followed, and property adjoining to the north was acquired for future expansion. The *Courier-Express* bought control of Radio Station WEBR in 1942 and operated it until 1972, when it was sold. John D. Wells and his "Grave to Gay" column came to the *Courier-Express* in 1926, remaining a fixture of the paper until 1929. During this time he was managing editor. He was followed by Fred McLennan who came from the *Express*, and John Tranter from the *Enquirer*.

Next came Leonard G. Feldmann who had risen through the ranks to the post, Raymond G. Urban became Business Manager, and Howard W. Clothier joined the company as auditor.

The sudden death of William J. Conners, Jr., on February 3, 1951, at 56 shocked the newspaper world. His son, William J. Conners, III, succeeding his father as President and Publisher, supervised continuing growth. A new building adjoining to the north, opened in 1972, had added facilities for off street newsprint unloading, automated handling of the large newsprint rolls, and increased space for expansion of advertising, circulation, and mail room departments.

Cy B. King joined the paper as Executive Editor in 1952, coming from news editor and general manager of WEBR radio. He had previously worked on the editorial staffs of the *Buffalo Evening News* and the *Pittsburgh Press*. Retiring in 1971, he was succeeded by Douglas Turner. Howard Clothier, who had been treasurer of the company, was, in addition named assistant to the publisher in 1954. Frank J. Clancy retired as General Manager in 1956, being succeeded by A. G. Bennett, whose father, W. S. Bennett, had held the post in earlier years. The second Bennett, who had joined the paper from Notre Dame University in 1928, retired in 1971. Richard C. Lyons, Jr., has the job now.

## **EXPRESS**

The *Buffalo Morning Express* was founded January 15, 1846, by A. M. Clapp & Co. Clapp was a printer who held various public offices including Erie County Supervisor, New York State Assemblyman, Congressional Printer in Washington, and Postmaster at Buffalo under

Abraham Lincoln. When he died in 1899 he was president of the Anti-Civil Service League. Clapp & McCredie, proprietors of the *Express*, absorbed the *Daily Democracy* in 1855. In 1866, the Express Printing Company was formed.

Three years later Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain) bought an interest and became editor for two years. During the early 1870's the paper was controlled by a group of Republican politicians, who sold it to George Selkirk in 1877. Later that year James N. Matthews became sole owner and editor, just as Buffalo was entering its period of greatest growth.

James N. Matthews, born in Bungay, England, in 1828, came to Buffalo at 18, already a trained printer. He was hired by the *Commercial Advertiser*, and soon became foreman of the composing room. A stint as foreman at the *Buffalo Republican* led to the establishment of his own shop in 1850. Later, he became foreman of the *Express* job plant, then a partner. In the 1880's together with William P. Northrup he formed the Matthews-Northrup Company, whose name rapidly became a by-word for fine printing.



*Home of the Express, northeast corner of Exchange and Washington Sts., 1912.*

Newspaper staffs were small in those days, and Mr. Matthews himself carefully edited the *Express*. Meticulous about the perfection of his printed page, he insisted on bringing his own type when a fire made it necessary to print the issue of April 17, 1885, in the *Courier* plant. The next day he was back in temporary quarters.

The *Sunday Express* first appeared November 20, 1883. *The Illustrated Express*, evolving from the *Sunday*, began on January 3, 1886. The pioneer in pictorial journalism, it gained national recognition.

George E. Matthews, who succeeded his father as publisher, was born here in 1855. He had joined the editorial staff of the paper upon graduation from Yale University in 1877. Later, he was made treasurer of the company. The *Express* grew under his direction, keeping its conservative Republican line, sharing the morning field with the opposite line *Courier*. George Matthews declined, with characteristic modesty, the honor of a post in President McKinley's cabinet.

The Pan-American Exposition of 1901 indicated Buffalo's achievement of metropolitan rank. Held on land just north of Delaware Park, the "Pan-Am" called attention to the newly developing electric power at Niagara Falls. The newspapers found themselves with their biggest story when President McKinley was shot by Leon Czolgosz, September 6, 1901, in the Temple of Music where he was holding a public reception. The eight-day watch while McKinley fought for his life, plus the arrest, trial, and conviction of the assassin, kept local reporters, editors, and visiting writers busy filing thousands of words for world-wide consumption. Theodore Roosevelt took the oath as President in the Wilcox residence at Delaware and North streets. The building is now a national historic shrine.

George E. Matthews died in 1911, survived by his sons, George E. Jr. and Burrows, and a daughter Harriet. George E. Jr. succeeded to the presidency of the J. N. Matthews Co., and Burrows Matthews became editor of the paper. Named for his maternal grandfather, George H. Burrows, who had been Superintendent of the Western Division of the New York Central Railroad, Burrows had joined the paper at 18 as a reporter, instead of entering Yale as planned. He served as city editor, Albany correspondent, Sunday editor, and became editor in 1923. A quiet, gentle man, he succeeded his brother in command in 1925 when the Matthews-Northrup Company was sold to the J. W. Clement Co.

William M. Ramsdell, a native Buffalonian, began delivering the *Express* as a boy in his neighborhood. At 17 he sought work at the paper. Hired as a collector at \$2.50 per week, he rose in the business office to

cashier, assistant business manager, advertising manager, business manager, and finally publisher, which position he held from 1909 to 1926, when he retired. His brother, Harry R., was longtime President of the M&T Bank.

The *Express* was pressing the *Courier* for leadership in the morning field, and when merger became necessary in 1926, Burrows Matthews took with him to the *Courier-Express* his most valued lieutenant, Frank J. Clancy who had been city editor and circulation manager.

Shortly after the merger, Mr. Matthews lent the support of the newspaper to a Girl Scout project to collect and repair used toys for distribution to needy children at Christmas. Out of this grew the *Courier-Express* Toy Fund. When James C. Kennedy started the Goodfellows in 1934, its funds were used for toys, and later to entertain servicemen during the war. Kennedy had come to the paper as promotion manager after experience on several Buffalo papers. He built the Goodfellows into a strong force for charity in Buffalo.

When Arthur Brisbane died in New York in 1936 he was the nation's highest paid newspaper columnist. Scion of a prominent Buffalo family — we all know the Brisbane Building at Main and Clinton — his entire newspaper career was based in New York City. His "Today" column had long been a favorite of *Enquirer* and *Courier-Express* readers. His final column appeared in the *Courier-Express* along with his obituary.

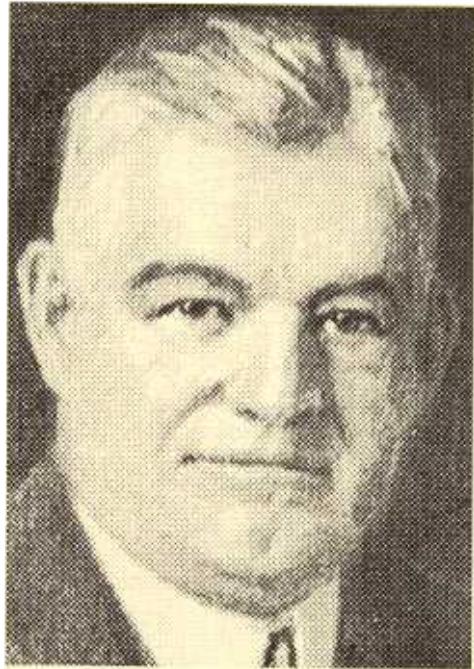
## NEWS

"Dozens Die in Fire in St. Louis, Mo.," "Governor appoints Dr. F. Park Lewis Manager of State Reservation at Niagara Falls", "Suffragettes Arrested in England", "Tango Danced in New York", "Trouble on Mexican Border", and the downtown stores of J. N. Adam & Co., H. A. Meldrum, Hamlins, and A. M. & A. Co. advertised their bargains. All this in the *Buffalo Evening News* of March 9, 1914 (1 cent). Later that day the founder of the *News*, Edward H. Butler, Sr. died in his home after a short illness.

Edward H. Butler was born in Leroy, New York, in 1850. Educated in the public schools there, his first newspaper job was with the *Leroy Gazette*. Later, he went to the Scranton, Pa., *Times* where he became City Editor. The *Scranton Free Press* attracted him next, but always in his mind was the desire to publish a paper in Western New York. The thought came alive in 1873 when he established the *Buffalo Sunday News*



*Edward H. Butler, Sr.*



*Wm. J. Conners, Sr.*

with John B. Adams as partner. The paper was an immediate success. Butler soon became sole owner, and his lively treatment of local news won it readers among the working class. The *Sunday Courier* followed two years later, the *Sunday Times* in 1879, and the *Sunday Express* in 1883. The daily *Evening News* first appeared October 11, 1880, and Butler's treatment of the news caught on with everyday readers. The young publisher had a personal charm with the city's merchants which helped to build his paper's advertising. The first to push classified "Want Ads," he got his paper far ahead in this department.

In 1881 the *News* moved from 214 to 218 Main St., and in 1898 to its new building at 216-218 Main St. After the assassination of President McKinley in 1901, Mr. Butler and George E. Matthews of the *Express* planned the McKinley Monument, which dominates Niagara Square in downtown Buffalo. In 1908, Mr. Butler was a delegate to the Republican National Convention, and he became a Trustee of the Grosvenor Library. The *News*, and its publisher, epitomized, in a lively way, the conservative and conventional viewpoint. John D. Wells was, from 1902-1920, telegraph editor, editor of the *Sunday Illustrated News*, and then managing editor. His column of humor and poetry entitled "From Grave to Gay" won a large following of readers.



*McKinley Monument dominating Niagara Square.*

Edward H. Butler, Jr. assumed control of the *News* in 1914 after his father's death. Born in Buffalo in 1883, he had joined the paper following graduation from Yale University in 1907, and had been named publisher in 1912. Twice President of the American Newspaper Publishers Association, he served also on the Board of Directors of the Associated Press from 1940 to 1949. The *News* entered the radio field in 1930 when WBEN went on the air. WEBR was acquired in 1936, and the *News* operated two stations until 1942 when WEBR was sold to the *Courier-Express*. Television was brought to Buffalo by the *News* when Channel 4 began in 1948, four years before any other station.

Mr. Butler, always active in support of the Republican party, became the friend of governors and presidents, but shunned political office. However, he gave freely of his time to charitable and social causes. He identified himself with education, became active on the Boards of Buffalo State Teachers College, and the University of Buffalo which awarded him its Chancellor's Medal in 1953. The *News* promoted "Smokes for Soldiers" during war years, and each Christmas season raised Funds for

Buffalo's "50 Neediest Families." This fund later turned to support of the Rotary Club's Camp for Crippled Children.

Edward H. Butler died February 19, 1956. Surviving were his wife, the former Kate Maddox Robinson of Atlanta, Ga., to whom he was married in 1909, and his daughter, Mrs. James H. Righter (Kate), now Mrs. Bruce E. Wallis. James H. Righter later became publisher of the *News*, serving until 1971. Mrs. Edward H. Butler is now President and Publisher of the *News*.

Strangely enough, the *Sunday News*, which started the paper's successful life, lost ground steadily to the *Courier, Times* and *Express*, finally ceasing publication in 1915. In recent years a beefed-up Saturday "Week End" edition has been trying to re-coup this Sunday defection.

When Alfred H. Kirchhofer retired in 1966 as editor of the *News* after 51 years with the paper, Mrs. Edward H. Butler said: "He has contributed immeasurably to the progress of this newspaper, which has been profoundly influenced by his competence and character." Kirchhofer came to the *News* in 1915 at 23 years of age, after having served on the *Commercial, Times, Courier*, and the *Western New York Post*. He began as a reporter, advancing to political writer, chief of the Albany bureau, and assistant city editor. In 1921, he organized and became head of the *News*' Washington bureau. He was promoted to managing editor in 1927, and became editor upon the death of Edward H. Butler in 1956. A strict taskmaster, he ran the news room with no nonsense, and no smoking rules that contrasted sharply with the easier regulations of other newspapers. Mr. Kirchhofer was President of the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1937. He became head of Radio Station WBEN in 1929 when its license was granted, and later directed the TV station. He was a founder and Board Member of the American Press Institute at Columbia University, and President of the National Press Club in 1927 when its 10 million dollar building was built in Washington. From 1950-52 he was President of the American Council on Education for Journalism. There is an endless list of his service on local boards, committees, clubs, along with the honors he has received therefrom.

Synonymous with service with the *News* is the name of Edgar C. Steeb, who retired as General Manager in 1964 after 53 years with the *News*. He was the last retiree to have worked with Mr. Butler, Sr. and Mr. Butler, Jr. Henry Z. Urban became General Manager and treasurer, and George T. Moseley secretary.

Continued family management of the *News* seems assured by Edward Butler Righter, grandson of Edward H. Butler, Jr., who joined the paper in 1973.

June 30, 1958, the *News* moved its printing plant, and stereo plate-casting, mail, shipping, paper receiving and storage departments to a newly constructed building at Washington and Scott Sts. Space was provided for the composing room and other mechanical departments, and frontage on Washington Street was left for a future office building.

The new building designed by the nationally prominent architect, Edward Durell Stone, was completed and occupied April 30, 1973. All operations are now in beautiful, modern surroundings at 1 News Plaza.

## **TIMES**

Norman E. Mack burst upon the Buffalo scene in 1879 when he published the first issue of the *Sunday Times* on September 7 from 200 Main Street. Mack was born in Ontario, but raised in Michigan, where he began his career selling advertising for hotel registers. In his travels he was inspired by the respect shown a local editor in a West Virginia hotel lobby and determined to own a newspaper. In 1878, he started the Jamestown, New York, *Sunday Gazette* when he was only 20 years old. A year later he came to nearby Buffalo, encouraged by a \$2,500.00 line of credit from a local printer. He found the *Sunday News* and the *Courier* firmly established, along with the short-lived *Independent* and the *Herald*. In 1881, his first attempt to publish daily lasted only four months, but when he tried morning and evening two years later, he was here to stay.

The success of the *Evening News* soon showed Mr. Mack where the future lay, so in 1886, he dropped his morning edition, gave up his *Independent* political policy, and became the first evening Democratic paper. The road was rocky, and Mack had to struggle to meet his payroll, often collecting from subscribers and advertisers on Monday and Tuesday in order to pay his staff on Wednesday. The *Times* supported Grover Cleveland for President in 1884. Cleveland had been Sheriff of Erie County, Mayor of Buffalo, and Governor of New York, and he won against James G. Blaine for the Presidency, after the bitter campaign of 1884.

After Cleveland's second term (he was 22nd and 24th President), Mack came out for William Jennings Bryan in 1896. The Bryan-McKinley Campaign became so spirited that circulation climbed for all the papers, and the *Times* challenged the *News* for evening leadership. Mr. Mack was chairman of the Democratic National Committee in 1908 and served on the committee until 1932 when he retired.

Offices had moved to 50 E. Seneca Street, and later to larger quarters at 191-93 Main Street. After W. J. Conners bought the *Courier*, the two





*George E. Lewis, a Buffalo newspaper distributor in 1890, with newsboys.*

publishers fought for Democratic party leadership, using the newspaper columns for weapons. The rivalry was often bitter, but the two men remained friends through the years. It made lively reading for the voters.

The newspaper staffs developed slowly. The city's biggest story, the shooting of McKinley at the Pan American's Temple of Music (which stood on what is now Fordham Drive near Lincoln Parkway) was received at the *Times* on the business office telephone because the one phone in the news room was busy.

Not only in politics did the *Times* differ from the *News*. The face of the newspaper was made up in a style called "sensational" or "flamboyant," and if the *News* could be called "conservative," the *Times* could be called "liberal." The beginning of World War I in 1914 and the United States support of the Allied cause brought difficult days to Buffalo with its large German population. Atrocity stories soon made all things German unpopular. The German-American Bank became Liberty Bank, and the German language newspapers faded away. However, the *Polish Everybody's Daily*, started in 1908, continued to grow until it, too, was caught in the "new generation, new language" trap in the 1950's.

The *Times* aimed at developing readers in the city's great East Side. In 1907, it started the *Illustrated Sunday Magazine*, included as a supplement to the *Sunday Times*. By 1914 this supplement was syndicated to sixteen papers in other cities with a total reported circulation of 1,600,000, a record for that time.

With four evening, two morning, and three Sunday papers in the early twenties, Buffalo saw great competition for circulation and advertising. The evening papers rushed to be first on the street, and the mornings did the same with their early "Bulldog" editions. The increasingly literate population absorbed not only the news, but the entertainment available in the continued stories and features, different in the six papers. Radio was waiting in the wings, TV was a long way off. The *Times* began in 1924 a "Mr. Fix-it" column (James C. Kennedy was its anonymous author) which has its present day counterpart in the *Courier-Express* "Courier Action" and the *News* "Newspower."

A history of the *Times* must include the name of Maurice D. (Monty) Condon who began a 65-year association with the Mack family in 1889 when he became a clerk in the *Times* business office. After working in various departments he was made assistant business manager in 1910, and later became treasurer. After the paper was sold he remained with Mr. Mack as personal business manager, and later managed the Mack Estate. Shortly before he died in 1956 at 85, he recalled that Mr Mack's support of Bryan for president in 1896 was almost a disaster for the *Times*. Bankers and big advertisers withdrew their support because of Bryan's monetary policies, and it took months to heal the wounds.

In 1929, the Scripps-Howard chain made Mr. Mack an offer he could not refuse, and he sold the *Times*. The Scripps Brothers had made a previous attempt to enter the Buffalo market when they started the *Evening Telegraph* in 1880, but found the *News* and *Commercial* too much for them. Chain operation fared no better in the 1930's. The *Times* went steadily downhill during ten years of constant staff changes and every promotional scheme in the book. In 1939, Scripps-Howard gave up and left Buffalo, although they continued to operate the *Times* color printing plant for some time. Norman E. Mack had a special touch with the *Times*. It was never the same without him.

With the end of the *Times* the evening field was left solely to the *News*, the morning and Sunday field to the *Courier-Express*. Shrinking in 25 years from six daily newspapers to two, Buffalo has followed a national trend, perhaps even being the leader of the trend, the cause of which seems to be principally economic. The squeeze of rising costs and rising taxes, or what might be called pressure from labor unions and govern-

ment, have made necessary the elimination of financially weaker publishing properties. Radio and TV have eroded circulations only slightly, whetting the readers' appetites for the "in depth" story done so well by present day newspaper writers. The huge capital investment necessary to publish a metropolitan newspaper has resulted in single ownership of newspapers in many large cities.

No chain or absentee ownership exists here. Buffalo is unique and blessed, to be served by two independent, family-owned competing newspapers.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Buffalo Historical Society Publications—Volume 19

History of the Niagara Frontier—M. M. Wilner. Volumes III and IV

Anne McIlhenny Matthews

James C. Kennedy

And my dozens of friends on the Buffalo *Courier-Express* and the Buffalo *Evening News*.

Herman Sass and his staff at the library of the Historical Society

A. GORDON BENNETT, former general manager and secretary for the *Courier-Express*, was educated at Holy Angels parochial, Buffalo Technical, and Lafayette High Schools, Canisius College, and Notre Dame University.

While still a student at Lafayette, Mr. Bennett worked part-time for the *Courier* and *Enquirer*. On January 1, 1956, he succeeded Frank J. Clancy as general manager. He was president of New York State Publishers Assn., financial chairman for the Good Fellows, an organization that provides toys for needy children and during World War II entertainment for servicemen. Mr. Bennett played an active role in the newspaper's relations with the public. He and his wife have four children.