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Manitoba History

The Journal of the
Manitoba Historical
Society



125
years of the
Winnipeg Press Club

**Congratulations Winnipeg Press Club
on your 125th Anniversary**



Maralee Caruso

Gord Leclerc



NEWS

WEEKNIGHTS 6:00

Manitoba History

No. 70 | Fall 2012



125 Years of the Winnipeg Press Club

Legendary Winnipeg editor John W. Dafoe (1866–1944) at his desk in the *Winnipeg Free Press* building on Carlton Street in the late 1930s. Dafoe was one of the reasons that Winnipeg had a disproportionate role in the development and evolution of Canadian media. He was a founding director of the Winnipeg Press Club in 1887, and received the club's highest award, an honorary lifetime membership, in 1943.

Source: *Winnipeg Free Press*

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"In this Parliament are three estates, the Lords Spiritual, the Lords Temporal and the Commons; but in the reporters' gallery yonder sits a Fourth Estate more important far than all."

Edmund Burke (1729–1797)



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The Manitoba Historical Society, established in June 1879, is the oldest historical organization in Western Canada. Its mandate is to:

- promote and encourage public interest in Manitoba and Canadian history
- encourage research and publications relating to the history of Manitoba
- foster the preservation of property relevant to an appreciation of the history of Manitoba
- assist in the formation and work of local historical societies in furthering the objectives of the Society throughout Manitoba

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Yearbooks produced by the Winnipeg Press Club for its annual Beer & Skits program were renowned for their irreverence.



125 Years of the Winnipeg Press Club

The Manitoba Historical Society and the Winnipeg Press Club are pleased to present this special issue of *Manitoba History* in honour of the Winnipeg Press Club, the oldest press club in Canada and one of the oldest in the world, as it celebrates its 125th anniversary.

As readers will quickly discover, the Winnipeg Press Club played a much larger role in media history in Winnipeg than many might have suspected. Indeed, Winnipeg's media as a whole played a much larger role in national history than would be expected for a mid-sized western city, as reflected in the rather cheeky theme of the first article, "How Winnipeg Invented the Media". There are many Canadian "firsts" in Winnipeg's media history, and you'll find that idea revisited elsewhere in this issue.

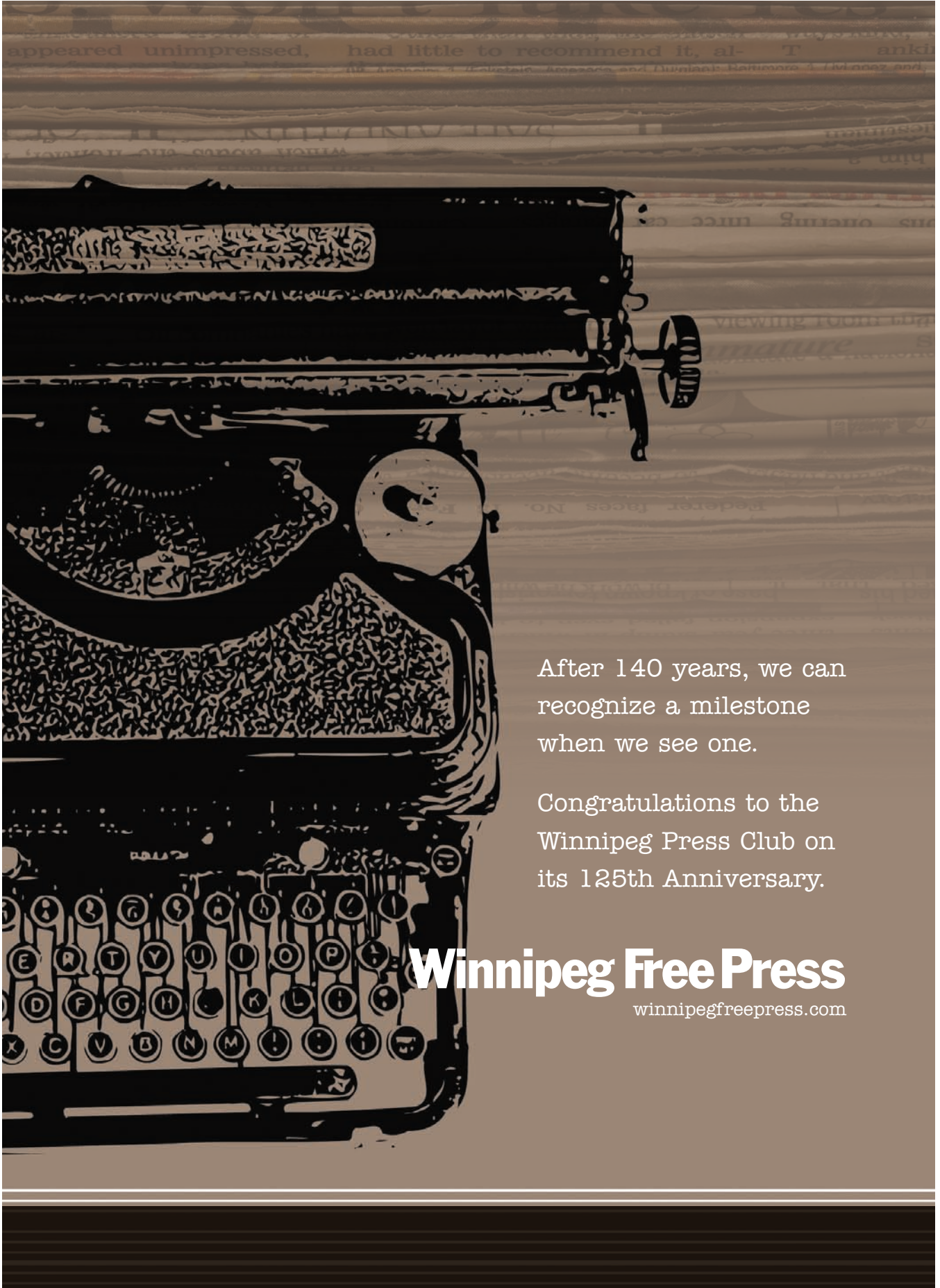
You will also find the first history ever written of the tumultuous early years of the Winnipeg Press Club. Almost all of the records from the first half-century of the Press Club were lost long ago, and it is only thanks to the recent creation of digitized, searchable data bases for newspapers, library archives, books and other sources that it has been feasible for Press Club researchers to piece together the puzzle of the past.

We are proud that the Historical Society and the Press Club, in partnership, have produced this issue of *Manitoba History*—for the first time in full colour—to enhance our understanding of the rich media history of Winnipeg. And this could not have been accomplished without the much-appreciated support of The Winnipeg Foundation.

Congratulations to the Winnipeg Press Club on achieving a remarkable milestone in Winnipeg history, and to all those who served the club during its first 125 years.

Annabelle Mays
President, Manitoba Historical Society

Dwight MacAulay
President, Winnipeg Press Club



After 140 years, we can recognize a milestone when we see one.

Congratulations to the Winnipeg Press Club on its 125th Anniversary.

Winnipeg Free Press

winnipegfreepress.com

How Winnipeg Invented the Media

by Ken Goldstein

Winnipeg is home to a remarkable number of Canadian media “firsts”, from producing the country’s very first moving picture to establishing Canadian Press, and so much more.

Introduction

It is indeed bold to declare Winnipeg—an isolated Prairie city—as the inventor of the media, but there is considerable evidence that people and events in and from Winnipeg have influenced the media in Canada and internationally far beyond what anyone might have anticipated.

There are important Winnipeg links to all of the following:

- the first Canadian movie
- the formation of Canadian Press
- the creation of the CBC
- the creation of CTV
- the regulation of broadcasting
- freedom of the press in Canada
- the world’s first co-operatively-owned daily newspaper
- Harlequin Books

But why Winnipeg? A century ago, Winnipeg was one of the fastest-growing cities in North America. It was a magnet for immigrants, for those seeking to build a better life, or make their fortune, or both, in a new country. And immigration itself can be seen as a form of entrepreneurship or risk-taking.

In 1895, Mark Twain visited Winnipeg on a speaking tour. After his visit, his tour promoter, James Pond, wrote this about the city:

Winnipeg, of all our visits, seems to have been the most enjoyable. In this isolated furthest north of all the cities is a colony of people who for enterprise, accomplishment & hospitality are hard to beat. They seem about the best read of any community we have found. Their isolation and long winters give them more opportunity for

books and social associations. Our audiences were large and appreciative.¹

In 1907, another famous writer, Rudyard Kipling, visited Winnipeg.² And he wrote two sentences that may describe Winnipeg—then and now—better than any other:

It was the spirit in the thin dancing air—the new spirit of the new city—which rejoiced me. Winnipeg has Things in abundance, but has learned to put them beneath her feet, not on top of her mind, and so is older than many cities.³

Setting the Stage

The first newspaper published in Manitoba—*The Nor’Wester*—appeared on 28 December 1859; it lasted almost 10 years. Many other publications followed, but none more important than the *Manitoba Free Press*, started by William F. Luxton and John A. Kenny as a weekly in 1872. It became a daily newspaper in 1874.⁴

As a result of a process that began in late 1889, and culminated on 13 January 1890, the *Free Press* absorbed its remaining competitor, the *Sun*, and there was a brief period in early 1890 when the *Free Press* was Winnipeg’s only daily newspaper. But Robert Lorne Richardson, a former city editor of the *Sun*, launched *The Winnipeg Tribune* on 28 January 1890.⁵

In order to pay for its ambitions, the *Free Press* had accepted financial support in 1888 and 1889 from two prominent Canadians, Sir Donald Smith and William Cornelius Van Horne—in effect, from the Canadian Pacific Railway. Luxton was not prepared to bend to the editorial dictates of Smith and Van Horne, but he was also not able to raise the funds to buy out their interests in the paper. He was forced out in 1893.⁶

After Luxton left the *Free Press*, he joined forces with a number of Manitoba Conservatives to start a new daily newspaper in 1894, called the *Nor’Wester*, which became the *Winnipeg Telegram* in 1898, although Luxton left the paper in that same year.

In the 1896 federal election, the *Tribune*’s Richardson was elected to the House of Commons as a Liberal representing Lisgar. Later in 1896, in a by-election, Clifford Sifton was elected as a Liberal to represent Brandon in the House of Commons, and was appointed Minister of the Interior in the Laurier Government.

Sifton and Richardson quickly became bitter enemies and rivals in a struggle for control of the Liberal party in Manitoba and the North-West. By the middle of 1897, Sifton had decided that Richardson’s *Tribune* could not be relied upon for the kind of political support he felt was necessary,



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so he entered into negotiations that led to his purchase of the *Free Press* from Smith and Van Horne.⁷

By 1898, Sifton was beginning to assert his control over the *Free Press*, and Richardson was using the *Tribune* to attack Sifton, but the *Winnipeg Telegram* was drifting. After Luxton left the *Telegram*, there was a period of over two years when prominent Winnipeg Conservatives sought out potential buyers for the paper.

Finally, early in 1901, W. Sanford Evans was persuaded to move to Winnipeg to invest in—and run—the *Telegram*. Evans, then 31, had received part of his education in Hamilton, where he had been a co-founder of the first Canadian Club. He had worked as a journalist for *The Mail and Empire* in Toronto, and was active in Conservative politics. Evans came to Winnipeg with assurances from prominent Conservatives about the financing of the *Telegram*, and also with a promise of support for a Conservative nomination for a seat in the House of Commons.⁸

But Evans was not the only person or company with whom local Conservatives had negotiated to take over the *Telegram*. Discussions had also taken place with the Southams, then owners of two newspapers, the *Hamilton Spectator* and the *Ottawa Citizen*. In fact, a story on Page 1 of *The Globe*, on 27 August 1900, had stated:

It is reported that the Southam Brothers of Ottawa have purchased The Winnipeg Telegram.⁹

The *Globe* report was not correct. But why choose Evans instead of established newspaper proprietors? The answer is contained in a letter from Sanford Evans to Wilson M. Southam (in Ottawa). Evans was acquainted with the Southam family, and wanted to assure them that he had not been working against their interests. He told Southam:

I found that because of the supposed connection between yourselves and the C.P.R. the Party in Manitoba hesitated to sanction the transfer of the paper to you seeing that the Free Press was already largely under the influence of that company ...

I learned that there would be no objection from any source to the taking over of the paper by a company which was not bound to any railroad interests. From all I could gather there seemed no probability that the opposition to your acquisition of the paper would be removed and so I felt that I would not be working against you in any way if I investigated the matter further.¹⁰

So it appears that a perceived link between the Southams and the CPR prevented their entry into the Winnipeg market in 1900 or 1901. One of the consequences was to bring to Winnipeg a person who would become one of the city's most prominent business and political leaders. The promised Conservative nomination was delivered in

Private Screening for Strange 1911 Film

The *Manitoba Free Press* published a small article about what must truly have been one of the strangest screenings in Winnipeg, a film produced by Winnipeg's official movie censor. The story ran at the bottom of page 7 of the 5 October 1911 edition, tucked innocuously between advertisements for Dodd's Kidney Pills, Ceetee's woolen underwear and O'Keefe's Pilsener Lager.

ODDEST MOVING PICTURES IN THE WORLD

While the managers of the many motion picture theatres in the city are vying with each other in the eternal search for novelties and sensations, it remained for Frank Kerr, the official censor of all motion picture films for Manitoba, to announce what promises to be the most unique "photoplay" exhibition ever seen in the world, far less just Winnipeg. As the result of the rigid censorship of films shown in Winnipeg during the past year or more, Mr. Kerr and his staff have found it necessary to "cut out" many strips of film depicting scenes that it was decided would be subversive of morals and might even be regarded as excitants of crime. These include pictures showing murders, suicides, hold-ups, glaring examples of marital infelicity and in some cases pictures of a more or less vicious nature. Scenes of this description were eliminated from the films to be shown in the city by the simple method of using a sharp pair of scissors. All those sections have been carefully saved and now they have been pasted together to make a "reel" of rather more than average length.

The exhibition of this unique "photoplay" will be confined to a very select few. Primarily, Mr. Kerr's idea was to show the members of the city council just what the censors are doing, and the city fathers will thereafter form the greater part of the small audience that will see a private "run". Managers of the different theatres will be invited, and apart from them, outsiders will stand a very poor chance of seeing the queerest set of pictures ever gathered together. The present intention is to give the exhibition in one of the city theatres after regular business hours, and the film is then to be destroyed.

How Winnipeg Invented the Media

1904, but Evans was defeated in the general election. In November 1905, Evans announced that he was severing his association with the *Telegram*, and he turned his attention to other business and political ventures in Winnipeg. He served as Winnipeg's mayor for three years (1909 to 1911) and later served as a Conservative member of the Manitoba Legislature from 1922 to 1936.¹¹

The *Telegram*, still with the financial backing of prominent Conservatives, then hired a new President and Editor, Mark Edgar Nichols. Nichols, 32, a tall and commanding figure, had been Parliamentary correspondent for the Toronto *Telegram*, and was an editorial writer for *The Toronto World* immediately prior to coming to Winnipeg.¹²

At the *Free Press*, Sifton had attracted two remarkable professionals to run his newspaper—E. H. Macklin as business manager and John W. Dafoe as editor. Edward Hamilton Macklin was born in Hamilton in 1863 and started newspaper work in the business office of the Toronto *Globe* at the age of 16, in 1879. On 25 March 1880, he was addressing envelopes in a room next to the office of George Brown, *The Globe's* founder and editor (and a Father of Confederation), when a discharged former employee shot Brown. (Brown died of his wound on 9 May 1880.) By 1890, Macklin was cashier of *The Globe*, and in 1900, he was recruited by Clifford Sifton to become business manager of the *Free Press*. Macklin cut a dashing figure, with moustache and goatee, black felt hat, cigar and cane.¹³

John Wesley Dafoe was born in the Ottawa Valley in 1866. He first came to Winnipeg in 1886, to work for

Luxton as a reporter at the *Free Press*, until he returned to Montreal in 1892.¹⁴ In 1901, Clifford Sifton offered Dafoe the editorship of the *Manitoba Free Press*. Both were Liberals; both saw the development of a Western Canada with a strong voice in national affairs. Dafoe accepted Sifton's offer and returned to Winnipeg as editor of the *Free Press*, a position he would hold until his death in 1944. Described by one writer as a "big, strong, shaggy man," Dafoe neither smoked nor drank.¹⁵

Although very different in personality, Dafoe and Macklin had skills that complemented each other. By 1907, under their combined direction, the *Free Press* was already well on its way to becoming the dominant daily newspaper in Western Canada and one of the most important in Canada, a position it would hold until the middle of the century.

From 1859, when the first *Nor'Wester* was published, to just after the turn of the twentieth century, Winnipeg was clearly inventing its own media, for and about the city and the region.

But, starting in 1897, Winnipeg and Manitoba have also been linked to a remarkable number of people and developments that have helped shape the course of the media far beyond the borders of the city, the province or the country.

The First Canadian Movie

The making of Canada's very first moving picture, in 1897–1898, is a story, in fact, worthy of Hollywood.¹⁶ And the more one researches the story, the more one finds a tangled web of arguments, claims and counter-claims, about who did the filming, who paid for it, and who had the right to use it.

James Freer emigrated from Bristol, England, in 1888, to farm near Brandon. According to a number of sources, starting in 1897, Freer produced the first Canadian movie, a documentary that came to be titled "Ten Years in Manitoba," and which put together a collection of scenes about the province. In 1898 and 1899, with financial help from the CPR, Freer toured Britain and used the film as a way of encouraging people to come to Manitoba.¹⁷

There is no question that Freer assembled and promoted this first Canadian movie. But who did the actual filming? It appears that Freer may have purchased the filmed scenes of Winnipeg and rural Manitoba from someone else—a Winnipeg bartender named R. A. "Dick" Hardie.

Freer's interest in using an earlier form of slide projection dates back to at least 1893, when he wrote to the federal government asking that the duty be waived on the importation of the necessary equipment.¹⁸

But the actual filming of the first *moving* pictures in Manitoba may be linked to three other people—the above-mentioned Hardie, an entertainer/promoter named Cosgrove, and E. H. Amet, an American involved with a number of early movie industry inventions. The relationships between and among those three, and with Freer, are not completely clear.



Winnipeg Free Press

A re-enactment of the 1872 arrival of the *Free Press'* first hand press in Winnipeg, on Portage Avenue in front of the *Free Press* building at Carlton Street. Note the billboard with the ladder beside it, used for posting hand-written bulletins, and for posting election results. The sign on the cart reads, "Red River Cart transporting to Winnipeg the original hand press first used by the *Free Press*. Capacity of 1st hand press about 400 pages per hour. Capacity of present press equipment 1,872,000 pages per hour. Ox driver (Pen) Robert Penwarden, Cornishman, Winnipeg Old-Timer and oldest member of the *Free Press* Family."

How Winnipeg Invented the Media

The filming of Manitoba scenes (including one of Manitoba Premier Greenway working on his own farm) appears to go back to mid-1897. For example, on 3 September 1897, the *Free Press* reported:

Messrs. [Amet] and Hardie, the two gentlemen who have been engaged for some time securing kinetograph scenes of Manitoba harvesting operations, have returned to the city, and report progress. One of the scenes secured is a very interesting one. It is Premier Greenway in one of his own fields, with coat off and sleeves rolled up, engaged in stooking grain. The scene will be shown by the Cosgrove company who leave shortly to play at points on the main line.¹⁹

On 9 December 1897, the *Free Press* reported:

Mr. James S. Freer of Brandon ... is in the city for the purpose of completing arrangements for an extended and well earned holiday in the old country. ... Instead of taking the trip for the purpose of a good soft time Mr. Freer's active temperament will find full scope in his new venture, for he intends to equip himself with the latest and most scientific method of advertising the country of his adoption by the kinetoscope and living pictures of prairie life ...²⁰

But a report in the *Free Press* the very next day (10 December 1897) seems to indicate that Hardie and Cosgrove also had wider exhibition plans for their Manitoba scenes:

Messrs. Cosgrove and Hardie left for Montreal and Ottawa yesterday to interview the C.P.R. and Dominion government with reference to the Kinetoscope harvesting scenes in Manitoba.²¹

Early in 1898, the *Free Press* reported that Hardie was exhibiting his scenes at the Grand Theatre in Winnipeg, and that Cosgrove was exhibiting similar scenes in smaller Manitoba communities. And then, on 15 January 1898, a letter from Hardie was published in the *Free Press*, challenging Cosgrove's claim to have originated the Kinetoscope harvesting scenes:

As I see a notice in one of the Brandon papers that John Cosgrove, of the Cosgrove family, was the originator of the Manitoba harvesting scenes and promoter of the kinetoscope exhibitions given by the Cosgrove family, I wish to state that the first kinetoscope the Cosgroves had out ... was owned by me, and is still in my possession. ... Now, as regards his being the originator of the Manitoba harvesting scenes, I have talked the matter over with E. H. Amet, of Chicago, the photographer who took those pictures before I ever saw Cosgrove, and defy Cosgrove to contradict any of the above statements.²²

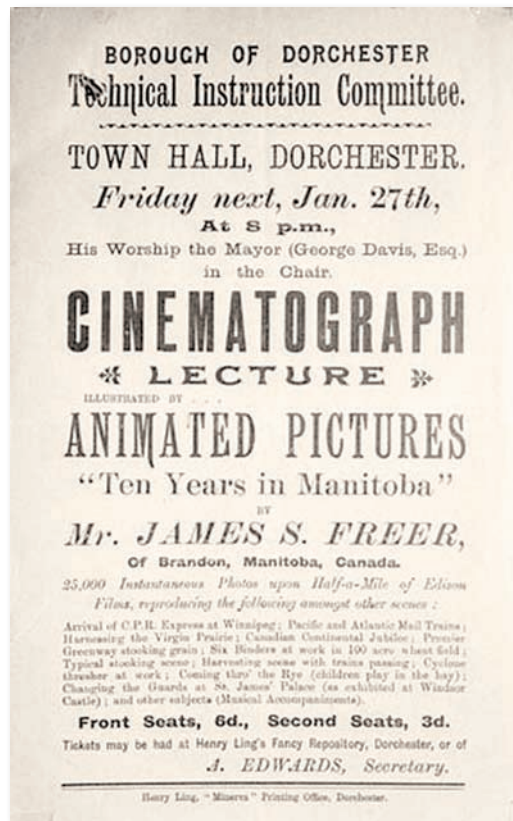
Cosgrove responded with a long letter to the *Free Press* that was published on 18 January 1898, in which he did, indeed, contradict Hardie's version of events. The letter from Cosgrove starts with these words:

To my surprise and astonishment, I see a notice in your paper under the head of "A Contradiction," by R. A. Hardie, about the origin of the Manitoba Harvesting Scenes, of which I not only claim to be the originator ... but financial promoter of the scheme as well.²³

Cosgrove's letter also dealt with the trip that he and Hardie had taken to Montreal and Ottawa:

Mr. Hardie is, of course, very much put out because I am not furnishing more money to further this scheme, but when I went down to Ottawa and Montreal to interview the C.P.R. and Dominion government a few weeks ago, they gave me very poor encouragement, and I decided to drop the thing at once. Mr. Hardie was to have gone with me to interview, but instead, got a free ticket to Montreal and return, and went to Syracuse on business.²⁴

It is not clear how, or if, the dispute between Hardie and Cosgrove was ever resolved. However, we do know that by March 1898, Freer was in London, exhibiting his film, which included scenes that fit the description of scenes used by Hardie.



A handbill announcing James Freer's moving picture "Ten Years in Manitoba", the first one ever made in Canada, being shown in Dorchester, England, in 1899.

How that happened may never be known with absolute certainty. But Freer farmed near Brandon, and was active in making slide presentations in communities in the area. He was likely acquainted with the Member of Parliament for Brandon, Clifford Sifton, who by 1897 was one of the most powerful members of the Laurier Cabinet. Thus, it is possible that Sifton was convinced to endorse Freer's scheme for exhibiting Manitoba scenes.

After touring Britain in 1898 and 1899, Freer continued his interest in filming Manitoba scenes. In 1901, he appeared in Winnipeg before the "royal reception executive committee," and asked for a grant of \$25 to help him purchase more film; his request was referred to a civic committee.²⁵

So, in the space of four years, we have the first Canadian movie, the first arguments over financing and copyright, and the first example of a Canadian film-maker asking for a government grant, all in Manitoba.

The Creation of Canadian Press

The year 1907 marked a turning point in the history of the media in Canada, because of a dispute that started in Winnipeg.

In 1907, the Canadian Pacific Railway Telegraph Company had a monopoly in the distribution of the Associated Press wire service in Canada. In July 1907, the railway telegraph company sent a note from its office at McDermot and Main to its three Winnipeg daily newspaper clients, the *Free Press*, *Tribune* and *Telegram*.²⁶ The note told them they would no longer receive the full New York AP feed every day from Eastern Canada. Instead, the telegraph company would decide what to send the papers from St. Paul, Minnesota. And the telegraph company also told the three newspapers that, on 1 August, their charges for receiving the AP service would increase substantially.²⁷

We know that these newspapers had personal and political rivalries that went far beyond normal commercial competition. And we also know that the *Free Press* was the strongest paper. In theory, it could have paid the increased amount, and hoped that the extra expense would have weakened its competitors.

But something very different happened. Shortly after receiving the note from the CPR telegraph company, and despite their rivalries, four people met: R. L. Richardson of the *Tribune*, M. E. Nichols of the *Telegram*, and E. H. Macklin and J. W. Dafoe of the *Free Press*. They decided that the telegraph company had overstepped the boundaries between content and carriage, and they set to work to create an alternative.²⁸

The first name they had for that alternative was Western Associated Press, but as the alternative spread to other newspapers across Canada, it adopted the name we know it by today—Canadian Press. In a paper presented to the Manitoba Historical Society in 1930, Dafoe talked of his involvement in the events that led to the formation of Canadian Press:

It seems incredible when it is recalled that up to 1907 the newspapers of Canada bought their [news services] from the telegraph companies, one of which, at least, was an auxiliary of a railway corporation. The impropriety of having such a service and its inadequacy were felt keenly by the Winnipeg newspapers and in the summer of 1907, finding something at last on which they could agree, they met together; Mr. Macklin and I for the *Free Press*; Mr. Nichols for the *Telegram*; and Mr. Richardson for the *Tribune*. We made a solemn vow that for better or worse, we would have our own news service, obtained from sources open to us.²⁹

Dafoe then went on to reveal his role in gaining access to news services from the United States:

I remember going first to Chicago and then to New York to arrange for such an independent news service as could be obtained at that time. The result was the formation of the Western Associated Press, which began in Winnipeg and spread throughout the west. Within five years cooperative news gathering came into effect throughout Canada. As the outcome of the movement which started in Winnipeg, the Canadian Press came into existence.³⁰

"Ralph Connor" Meets the President

A hundred years ago, Winnipeg was home to one of the most famous living Canadians—the novelist Ralph Connor. But "Ralph Connor" was the pen name of one of Winnipeg's prominent citizens, the Rev. Charles William Gordon of St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church. His fame spread far beyond the borders of Canada, and his fans included Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. In fact, Gordon attended Wilson's inauguration in 1913.

After the First World War broke out, Gordon enlisted, at the age of 54, as a chaplain to the Canadian forces. But the British government felt that Gordon's fame could be better used in attempting to encourage the United States to enter the war. So Gordon came back to Winnipeg at Christmas 1916, and then, in early 1917, he set off on a speaking tour of the United States.³¹

On Sunday, 18 February 1917, Gordon spoke to a large audience at the First Congregational Church in Washington, DC.³² The next day, he sent a note to the White House. On Tuesday, 20 February 1917, at 4:30 PM, Rev. Charles W. Gordon of Winnipeg was ushered in to meet the President of the United States, and he proceeded to give President Wilson a tongue-lashing over the USA's continued neutrality.³³

Newspaperwomen and the Right to Vote

In the years leading up to 1916, a different kind of battle had been fought in Manitoba—the political battle to allow

How Winnipeg Invented the Media



Winnipeg Free Press

With no television and few radios in Winnipeg in 1907, the provincial election results were posted by hand on the large billboard on the Portage Avenue side of the *Free Press* building, drawing large crowds for the latest news.

women to vote. In her book, *Women Who Made the News*, Marjory Lang talks about the famous “Mock Parliament” held in Winnipeg in January 1914, and notes:

In the skit that made the Winnipeg Political Equality League famous and Manitoba premier Sir Rodmond Roblin infamous, newspaperwomen took the leading roles. Kenneth Haig of the *Manitoba Free Press* played the attorney general, Isabel Graham of the *Grain Growers’ Guide* was speaker, while Genevieve Lipsett-Skinner, political correspondent for a variety of papers including the conservative *Winnipeg Telegram*, became minister of economy and agriculture. The Beynon sisters, Lillian Thomas and Francis, acted as members of the opposition, while Nellie McClung clinched her place in women’s history by her cheeky portrayal of the fatuous manner of the premier himself. Directing the whole production was Harriet Walker, editor of *Curtain Call*.³⁴

Two years later, in January 1916, Manitoba became the first province in Canada to extend to women the right to vote in provincial elections.

Student Paper Takes the Lead in 1920

Let’s move forward now, to 1920, when we find that Manitoba had over 100 newspapers of all types, including dailies, weeklies, and many ethnic newspapers serving immigrant communities.

In January 1920, the three daily newspapers in Winnipeg were unable to publish for six days because of a shortage of newsprint. The student newspaper at the University of Manitoba, *The Manitoban*, had sufficient newsprint, and published as a daily for four of those days.³⁵

Since *The Manitoban* did not have access to news services, it monitored radio broadcasts from the U.S. and

used them as a source for non-local news. The editor of *The Manitoban* was a young man named Graham Spry, whose interest in radio would later have a profound influence on the development of this new medium in Canada.

Seditious Libel and Freedom of the Press

A number of trials of the leaders of the 1919 general strike were going on in Winnipeg in early 1920, and one of them had important implications for the freedom of the press in Canada. Two of the strike leaders had been charged with seditious libel. The first of those libel trials to proceed was against Fred Dixon, a member of the Manitoba Legislature, and it started on 20 January 1920. Dixon chose to defend himself, to defend the proposition that a citizen had the right to criticize the government. The jury’s verdict was delivered on 16 February 1920: not guilty. Dixon left the courtroom, walked across Broadway and resumed his seat in the Manitoba Legislature.³⁶

As a result of the Dixon verdict, the Crown decided not to proceed with the seditious libel case against the other person that had been charged, J. S. Woodsworth. Woodsworth was subsequently elected to Parliament, became the first leader of the CCF, and the rest of that story is, as they say, truly history.

In 1835, in Nova Scotia, when he won acquittal against charges of criminal libel, Joseph Howe famously stated, “Leave an unshackled press as a legacy to your children.”³⁷ There is a philosophical link that runs from Howe in Nova Scotia to Dixon in Winnipeg to our current Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Southam and Sifton and Anti-Competitive Behaviour

The newsprint shortage and the seditious libel decision were just the beginning of a remarkable year. In June 1920, the Southam company purchased *The Winnipeg Tribune*. In October 1920, Southam also purchased the *Winnipeg Telegram*, and merged it into the *Tribune*, leaving Winnipeg with two daily newspapers.³⁸

About a year later, Winnipeg was the focus of one of the more interesting chapters in the history of Canadian newspapers. It started with a letter from Wilson M. Southam to Sir Clifford Sifton. Southam had entered into a series of arrangements to minimize the competition with its rival in Ottawa, and now was seeking to do the same thing in Winnipeg.³⁹

In *News and the Southams*, author Charles Bruce documented the fact that there were co-operative arrangements between Southam’s *Ottawa Citizen* and the competing *Ottawa Journal*, beginning as early as 1916. Bruce reported:

In a business sense, the *Citizen* and the *Journal* went into a kind of partnership to end cut-throat competition ... some of its business effects were preserved for years in a series of working agreements.

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Most important and longest lasting of these was the Ottawa Newspapers' Subscription bureau, a joint set-up that took over circulation of both papers.

An advertising agreement, even more unusual in form, provided that in any year when one paper's lineage exceeded the other's (excluding the Journal's patent-medicine ads) they would split the net surplus revenue.⁴⁰

On 25 October 1921, Wilson M. Southam wrote to Sir Clifford Sifton to suggest that the two publishers form an arrangement in Winnipeg similar to the arrangement that Southam had made with its competitor in Ottawa:

I would think the first step in such a task would be to furnish each other with full and complete information in regard to all the departments and details of our respective businesses. We are willing to trust you and your executives with this information in regard to The Tribune as a guarantee of our good faith. If similar information can be furnished us in regard to The Free Press each side will then be in a position to make suggestions for the solution of our trouble, based on accurate information of the entire field.⁴¹

Southam wrote Sifton again on 2 November 1921, and compared the situation in Winnipeg with the situation in Ottawa:

I have just been examining the statements of the various newspapers in which we are interested and I note that The Winnipeg Tribune, during the month of September, because of competitive expenditures, has a percentage of advertising to news of only 49.31%, whereas The Citizen, because of co-operative arrangements, was enabled to run 58.99% of advertising to news.⁴²

From reviewing the correspondence, it appears that some form of arrangement was developed between the two companies for their Winnipeg newspapers, and that it may have continued (at least to some degree) until the early 1960s.⁴³

In 1924, there was a rumour that a Vancouver entrepreneur named Charles Campbell would attempt to undercut the two Winnipeg dailies by starting a one-cent daily newspaper in Winnipeg, at a time when the Winnipeg dailies were charging five cents a copy. (Campbell had done the same in Vancouver, and published the paper until bought out by one of the other Vancouver dailies.⁴⁴) To deal with the potential competitor, representatives of Southam and Sifton met to plan a response, as reported by E. H. Macklin, the President and General Manager of the *Free Press*, to Sir Clifford Sifton, in a letter dated 21 August 1924:

A one-cent newspaper in Winnipeg would attract readers like a crowd to a prize fight and, like the crowd at a prize fight, they would consist of all sorts and conditions, the poor as well as the rich.⁴⁵

Macklin then went on to outline the planned strategy:

There is nothing complicated or subtle about the plan to be adopted. It consists in closely watching the other fellow's movements and intentions, employing detectives for the service, and when we learn that it is Campbell's intention to actually produce a paper the next step is to discover the date of the publication and anticipate the appearance of his paper by putting a one-cent paper on the streets under cover of a separate company and financed by the two Winnipeg newspapers.⁴⁶

We do not know if Campbell was informed of the Winnipeg plans to counter his possible entry into the

The Ethnic Press and Me

While the daily newspapers, and particularly the *Free Press*, were important in the early part of the 20th century, we should not forget the many ethnic newspapers that were published in Winnipeg in languages other than English or French.

Those papers served three main functions—to help newcomers adjust to their new country, to bring news of the old country, and to act as a kind of bulletin board for people in that language community.

One such example comes to mind. About 100 years ago, Frank Simkin started the *Yiddishe Vorte*, published in Yiddish.* In the fall of 1920, that paper carried a letter from a young woman near Kiev, looking for help from an aunt and uncle that she thought were in Winnipeg. A woman read the letter, knew the aunt and uncle, and ran down Selkirk Avenue to tell them “your niece is looking for you.” The aunt and uncle went to one of the loan societies and helped to bring over the young woman, her husband, and their two young daughters.

The young woman and her husband were my grandparents; their daughters were my mother and my aunt. Without the *Yiddishe Vorte*, you might be reading a different article.

Ken Goldstein

* One of the people who helped Frank Simkin start the paper was Harry Parker, the father of Ed Parker of Ryerson Journalism fame.

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market, but we do know that Campbell did not attempt to start a one-cent daily newspaper in Winnipeg.

Radio as “New Media”

In the early 1920s, newspapers were still important, but radio was “new media.” By 1922, the *Free Press* and *Tribune* had each established radio stations. By 1923, however, the experiments were not going well. At the same time, the Manitoba Telephone System (Manitoba Government Telephones) was interested in radio, in part because it saw radio as a potential competitor.

The two daily newspapers agreed to vacate the field, and the telephone system established a new radio station in Winnipeg, CKY. To make that happen, the governments of Manitoba and Canada negotiated a deal in 1923 under which the provincial telephone system would receive 50 per cent of the radio receiver licence fees collected in Manitoba, and would have what amounted to a veto over any other radio station licences in the province.⁴⁷

The head of the Manitoba Telephone System at the time was John E. Lowry, and it can be argued that, by exercising the powers in the agreement between Canada and Manitoba, he was, in fact, Canada’s first regulator of broadcasting.

The degree to which the Province of Manitoba exercised real regulatory control over radio broadcasting in Manitoba in the late 1920s is illustrated by an exchange of correspondence from 1927, involving James Richardson & Sons, Limited, the provincial government, and the federal Department of Marine and Fisheries (which had responsibility for radio at that time).

In March 1927, James Richardson & Sons was seeking a licence to establish a radio station in Brandon. The company started by contacting the federal department, and that department’s reply is described in a 10 March 1927 letter from James Richardson & Sons to the federal Department of Marine and Fisheries:

We wish to thank you for your telegram of the 9th instant, explaining that an agreement exists between the Dominion Government and our Provincial Government, which prevents your department from considering an application from us for the establishment of a broadcast station at Brandon.⁴⁸

Therefore, on 10 March 1927, the company applied for a radio licence to *both* the Manitoba Minister of Telephones *and* the federal Department of Marine and Fisheries. On 16 March 1927, Lowry replied to Paul Dow of James Richardson & Sons, as follows:

Your letter of March 10th to the Honorable Minister of Telephones, applying for a broadcasting license at Brandon, has been referred to me with instructions to advise you that there appears insufficient reasons to authorise another broadcasting station at this time.⁴⁹

Lowry briefed Premier John Bracken on the subject in a letter dated 3 May 1927, in which he raised the possibility that the granting of a radio licence to James Richardson & Sons would allow that company to engage in propaganda against the wheat pool movement.⁵⁰

On 16 August 1927, James A. Richardson himself talked to Premier John Bracken about his company’s desire for a radio station in Brandon, and then followed up with a two-page letter to Premier Bracken taking issue with Lowry’s refusal to grant a radio licence to James Richardson & Sons.⁵¹ But Bracken did not overrule Lowry. Having exercised its veto, the Manitoba Telephone System then established radio station CKX in Brandon in 1928.

And here is an interesting historical footnote. In 1923, the federal government had indicated its willingness to make similar licence-fee sharing arrangements with stations in other provinces, but none of them took Ottawa up on the offer. One can only speculate on how broadcasting in Canada might have developed differently if other stations and/or other provincial governments would have acted on the federal government’s willingness to share some of its jurisdiction at that time.

While the business models for radio may have been uncertain, public interest in radio was high. As has been the case with the Internet, teenagers were teaching the technology to adults. One of the teenagers in Winnipeg in the 1920s was a young man named Spencer Caldwell. At 19, he was managing the radio department in the new Hudson’s Bay store in downtown Winnipeg. He decided to enter broadcasting as a career. Many years later, in 1961, he was awarded the licence for CTV—Canada’s first private television network.⁵²

At the same Winnipeg high school Caldwell had attended (Kelvin) and two years younger than Caldwell, there was another young man interested in radio. In fact, he had built his own crystal set at the age of 12. His name was Marshall McLuhan.⁵³



Winnipeg Free Press

Free Press newspapers were delivered and sold out of a motorcycle sidecar, 1920s.

By the late 1920s, interest in radio had grown sufficiently that the federal government set up the Aird Royal Commission, which recommended a publicly owned system.⁵⁴ To support the Aird Commission proposals, Graham Spry, the former student editor of *The Manitoban*, helped establish the Canadian Radio League, which lobbied successfully for the creation of a national public broadcaster in Canada.

The Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission (CRBC) was created in 1932 and was replaced by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in 1936. And Spry, of course, is commonly considered to be the father of the CBC.

“Wilhelmina Stitch”:

From Winnipeg to Britain’s *Daily Herald*

In 1933, in England, the *Daily Herald* became the world’s best-selling newspaper, with a circulation of two million.⁵⁵ And, by mid-1934, one of the most popular columnists on that paper was Wilhelmina Stitch. Except that was not her real name. Her real name was Ruth Jacobs Cohen Collie. She had been married to E. Arakie Cohen, a prominent Winnipeg lawyer.

Arakie Cohen was born in Rangoon, Burma, educated in Calcutta, moved to London, and then came to Winnipeg in 1906. On a trip to England in 1908, he wooed and wed Ruth Jacobs, a granddaughter of one of the rabbis at the Great Synagogue of London. He brought his wife home to Winnipeg, where they lived on Polson Avenue.⁵⁶

From 1913 to 1919, Ruth Cohen dabbled in journalism as a hobby, under different pen names. When Arakie Cohen died in 1919, she was forced to rely on her writing skills to support herself and her young son. She eventually moved back to England, remarried and achieved fame as “Wilhelmina Stitch.”⁵⁷

“The Greatest Man in Canada”

In June 1942, *Fortune* magazine carried an article titled “The Greatest Man in Canada.”⁵⁸ The article was about one of Canada’s greatest journalists, John W. Dafoe, the editor of the *Winnipeg Free Press* from 1901 to his passing in 1944.

Over more than four decades, it was the editorial voice of John W. Dafoe, in the *Free Press*, that helped put Winnipeg on the map. While the *Free Press* tended to favour what might be called a right-wing 19th-century liberalism on economic matters, it was in foreign policy that Dafoe’s voice often spoke most forcefully.

In September 1938, Prime Minister Chamberlain of England signed the Munich Agreement with Hitler, effectively giving Nazi Germany control over Czechoslovakia. Many Western media were hesitant to be too critical, since the memory of the First World War was only 20 years old. In fact, the BBC deliberately downplayed the opposition to the Munich Agreement at the urging of the British Foreign Office.⁵⁹

Dafoe did not hesitate to be critical. The headline on the lead editorial in the *Free Press* on 30 September 1938 read: “What’s the Cheering For?” Dafoe took the Munich



Archives of Manitoba, *Western Home Monthly*, April 1924, page 14.

Ruth Cohen Collie (1888–1936) wrote articles for the *Winnipeg Tribune* and *Winnipeg Telegram* under the pen names of “Sheila Rand” and “Wilhelmina Stitch.” She would later be described as “one of the best-known women writers in the British Empire.”

Agreement apart and, as a result, there were many in the city who cancelled their subscriptions to the *Free Press* and accused Dafoe of being a warmonger.

An article by Robert J. Young (of the University of Winnipeg) in the *Queen’s Quarterly*, Winter 1999, describes the *Free Press*’s continuing opposition to fascism in the 1930s. Young concludes the article with these words about Dafoe and the *Free Press*: “The press, at least this one, in this respect, and at this time, had done its job, fulfilled its responsibilities.”⁶⁰

By September 1939, events proved that Dafoe was correct. A measure of Dafoe’s reputation as an editor can be found in the Dafoe correspondence in the Archives at the University of Manitoba. There is a letter to Dafoe there, dated 31 May 1940. Part of the letter reads:

... I and a lot of people with whom I have seen eye to eye have been too soft, too willing to compromise ... I did not have sense enough to see that if I didn’t get a real League of Nations, I could not afford the luxury of disarmament. ...⁶¹

The letter is signed by Arthur Hays Sulzberger, the publisher of *The New York Times*.⁶²

On 16 October 1943, a dinner of the Winnipeg Press Club was held at Winnipeg’s Royal Alexandra Hotel to honour J. W. Dafoe, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of his career in journalism:

Originally planned as a function of the Press club, of which Dr. Dafoe is a charter member, the dinner

The Day the Founder of *Time* Magazine Came to Winnipeg to See the Editor of the *Free Press*

In 1923, Henry R. Luce and Briton Hadden founded *Time: The Weekly News-Magazine*. After Hadden's death in 1929, Luce took full control of the venture, and added *Fortune* in 1930, and *Life* in 1936. By 1940, Luce was one of the most powerful and successful publishers in America.¹

In July 1941, Luce was planning a trip to Jasper, Alberta. He asked his assistant, Allen Grover, to contact *Time's* Ottawa correspondent, Fillmore Calhoun, for advice on people to talk to in Canada. Here is part of Calhoun's reply:

Just occurred to me that if HRL has some spare time en route across Canada that he could really get an idea of what Canada is like by a stopover in Winnipeg.

John W. Dafoe, editor of the Winnipeg Free Press, is one of the last of the old "personal" journalists and one of the ablest editors on the Continent. He's a big hulking bear of a man who has made and broken governments in Canada. He still believes in the power of the editorial page and puts out the only one in Canada worth reading. He turned down a knighthood with the classic comment: "Why! I shovel the snow off my sidewalks and stoke my own furnace!"

He also has turned down the Ambassadorship to Washington and numerous cabinet offers, preferring to stay on the outside raising hob if necessary and directing such efforts as the famed Rowell-Sirois report detailing what is tragically wrong with Canada's system of government.

Also in Winnipeg is John Bracken, premier of Manitoba province for years on end. A one-time professor of agriculture, Bracken was "drafted" as premier by revolting farmers in the early 20's, has kept himself in office since then by coalition moves. He is not spectacular nor even particularly colorful but he has the flavor of a solid statesman.

If the boss could meet and talk to those two men (who are friends and probably would be delighted to arrange a lunch or dinner in Winnipeg) he'd get a broader and more down-to-earth view of the Canadian scene than he could from any other two men in Canada.²

Apparently, on his way across Canada (heading east from Jasper) near the end of July 1941, Luce dropped in to see Dafoe at the *Free Press* building on Carlton Street in Winnipeg—but on a morning that Dafoe was away!

In correspondence in the following week, Dafoe apologized for being away when Luce called, and the two men exchanged thoughts on the state of the war at that point.³ It seems likely that the Luce trip to Canada in 1941 was, at least in part, the genesis of the article on Dafoe called "The Greatest Man in Canada", which appeared in the June 1942 issue of *Fortune* magazine.

1. "Henry Luce, 68, Dies in Phoenix", *The New York Times*, 1 March 1967, page 1.
2. Memo from Fillmore Calhoun to Allen Grover, 23 July 1941, Time Inc. Archives, New York.
3. Letter from John W. Dafoe to Henry R. Luce, 5 August 1941; letter from Henry R. Luce to John W. Dafoe, 9 August 1941; John W. Dafoe Papers, University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections.

was expanded to accommodate those outside the profession who wished to give recognition to a unique record in Canadian journalism.

Nearly 500 guests were present at the dinner, including prominent out-of-towners who came from both east and west; hundreds sent their regrets as being unable to attend, and many more had a share in the event through the C.B.C.'s national network. Part of Dr. Dafoe's address was sent out over the air and movie cameras whirred as the National Film board and photographers for Time and Life recorded the proceedings.⁶³

Dafoe died on 9 January 1944. In a reminiscence about Dafoe published in 1948, George V. Ferguson, who had been managing editor of the *Free Press*, seemed to recognize that, with Dafoe's passing, an era had come to an end: "It was a newspaper's Golden Age. It lasted a long time."⁶⁴

"Owned and Controlled by its Readers"

On Friday, 9 November 1945, *The Winnipeg Tribune* and the *Winnipeg Free Press* both failed to publish, the result of a labour dispute with the International Typographical Union. The next day, Saturday, 10 November, *Free Press* and *Tribune* readers received a strange-looking newspaper—a joint edition of the two newspapers. That joint publication would continue until the following February, and it had

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a number of consequences, some of which are being felt today.

The labour dispute and the joint publication provided impetus to those who wanted a different kind of newspaper in Winnipeg, and so, in 1946, the first steps were taken to create a daily newspaper to be published as a consumer co-operative. Shares were sold door-to-door, with the promise that the new paper, to be called the Citizen, would be owned and controlled by its readers.

The Winnipeg Citizen actually began publication on 1 March 1948 as a morning newspaper in competition with the two afternoon dailies. The paper lasted 13 months and 13 days, until 13 April 1949, when it went out of business, a victim of being undercapitalized. It was the first time anywhere in the world that any one had tried to start a daily newspaper as a consumer co-operative.

The Citizen provided the first real journalism job for a young writer named Margaret Laurence, who was the paper's labour reporter. When she left, the news editor of the Citizen offered the job to an acquaintance from Vancouver named Fred Wilmot, who wanted to break into daily journalism. And Fred Wilmot may have been the first black journalist ever hired by a Canadian daily newspaper.

In the case of radio, the changes of the early 1930s had put an end to the provincial telephone system (MTS) veto power over competitors, and to the licence-fee sharing, but MTS continued to operate CKY and CKX as commercial affiliates of the CBC.

In early 1946, the CCF government of Saskatchewan, under Premier T. C. Douglas, entered into an agreement to purchase CHAB in Moose Jaw and applied to the Board of the CBC—which was then also the regulator—for permission to have the ownership of the licence transferred. Permission was denied, and the federal government changed the rules and announced a new policy in May 1946 that prohibited the granting of broadcast licences to provincial governments.⁶⁵

In 1948, CKY in Winnipeg was sold to the CBC and became CBW. (The CKY call letters were reactivated the next year for a new private station in Winnipeg.) The government's station in Brandon, CKX, was sold to an automobile dealer named John Boyd Craig.⁶⁶

Another media innovation from Winnipeg also dates back to the 1940s—and it has lasted to this day. Richard Bonnycastle was managing a Winnipeg company, Advocate Printers, and was looking for additional uses for its printing presses. In 1949, he founded Harlequin Books to reprint mass market paperbacks published in the US and UK. The idea took off, and Harlequin became a major publisher of romance novels. Harlequin has been owned by Torstar since 1981, and has contributed significant profits to that company over the years.⁶⁷

Also in the late 1940s, in Toronto, former Winnipegger Ed Parker was setting up what would become the Ryerson Journalism program. He recruited Ted Schrader to teach in the program. Schrader was a former Winnipeg Tribune columnist and past president of the Winnipeg Press Club. Under Schrader's leadership, the Ryerson Journalism program became one of the pre-eminent programs of its type in North America.⁶⁸

And There's More ...

The list could continue, of course, to include the introduction of television in the 1950s and its impact on other media, the formation of FP Publications, or the creation of CanWest in Winnipeg in the 1970s. And there were—and are—many talented writers, whose influence extended far beyond Winnipeg and Manitoba.

It is also worthy of note that Marshall McLuhan, a graduate of Kelvin High School and the University of Manitoba, predicted the current decline of the newspaper industry—back in 1964—when he said:

The classified ads (and stock-market quotations) are the bedrock of the press. Should an alternative source of easy access to such diverse daily information be found, the press will fold.⁶⁹



In late 1945, the Winnipeg Free Press and The Winnipeg Tribune were both hit with a labour dispute by their typesetters, and published a joint issue starting on Saturday, 10 November. The joint publication continued for a number of months.

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One is tempted to speculate on how much of McLuhan's prediction was based on theory, and how much was based on the fact that he grew up in Winnipeg reading the *Free Press*, which dominated the classified advertising market in Winnipeg at that time.

So did Winnipeg really invent the media? Obviously, not by itself. But did it contribute to the development of the media above and beyond its size and location? Absolutely. ☞

Notes


1. James Burton Pond, notebook relating to S. L. Clemens' (Mark Twain) readings and visit to Winnipeg on 26–28 July 1895, New York Public Library. (Note: In the 19th century, "interprise" was sometimes used as an alternate spelling for "enterprise".)
2. "Voice of a Poet Heard in Prose", *Manitoba Free Press* (hereafter, *MFP*), 3 October 1907, page 1.
3. Rudyard Kipling, *Letters to the Family*, The Macmillan Company of Canada, 1910, pages 62–63.
4. The *Manitoba Free Press* changed its name to the *Winnipeg Free Press* in 1931.
5. "The Sun Sold", *MFP*, 1 January 1890, p. 4; "Announcement", *MFP*, 14 January 1890, page 8; "The First Decade, 1890–1900", *The Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 23 May 1940, page 2.
6. David J. Hall, *Clifford Sifton, Volume One: The Young Napoleon, 1861–1900*, University of British Columbia Press, 1981, pages 209–229.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Wade A. Henry, "W. Sanford Evans and the Canadian Club of Winnipeg, 1904–1919", *Manitoba History*, Spring 1994, pages 2–8.
9. "General News", *The Globe*, 27 August 1900, page 1.
10. Letter from Sanford Evans to Wilson Southam, 8 January 1900 [1901?—see following note], William Sanford Evans Papers, Archives of Manitoba. (Note: The letter is typewritten, and is dated 8 January 1900. Based on the sequence of events, and other letters in the same archival file, it is likely that Evans, in typing the letter, inadvertently used the date of the year just ended, and that the correct date should be 8 January 1901.)
11. "William Sanford Evans, Statistician, Dies At 80", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 27 June 1949, page 1.
12. "M. E. Nichols, Newspaper Man", biographical sketch prepared by Canadian Press, 5 December 1957.
13. "Edward H. Macklin", biography prepared by Associated Press, 1 July 1938; "Pioneer Newsman, E. H. Macklin Dies", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 30 April 1946, page 1; "Macklin Of The Free Press", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 30 April 1946, page 11.
14. In 1887, as a young reporter, Dafoe was elected to the first board of directors of the newly formed Winnipeg Press Club. In 1889, he was joined on the executive of the Press Club by Robert Lorne Richardson, then city editor of the *Winnipeg Sun*.
15. Jim Blanchard, "John W. Dafoe", in J. Blanchard, ed., *A Thousand Miles of Prairie*, University of Manitoba Press, 2002, pages 219–220; F. W. Gibson, "The Rise and Decline of the Winnipeg Free Press", *The Kingston Whig-Standard Magazine*, 25 August 1990 [accessed online].
16. I am indebted to film historian Gene Walz for his assistance in researching the early history of filming in Manitoba.
17. See, for example: Peter Morris, *Embattled Shadows, A History of Canadian Cinema, 1895–1939*, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978, page 30; Sam Kula, "Steam Movies: Railroads and Moving Images", in Hugh A. Dempsey, ed., *The CPR West: The Iron Road and the Making of a Nation*, Douglas & McIntyre, 1984, page 247.
18. Based on a review of the 1893 correspondence with Freer in the federal Department of the Interior Papers, Government of Canada, Library and Archives of Canada [LAC].
19. "City And General", *MFP*, 3 September 1897, page 6.
20. "Scenes For England", *MFP*, 9 December 1897, page 4.
21. "City And General", *MFP*, 10 December 1897, page 6.
22. "A Contradiction", *MFP*, 15 January 1898, page 4.
23. "Mr. Cosgrove's Reply", *MFP*, 18 January 1898, page 3.
24. *Ibid.*
25. "The Committee on Royal Welcome", *Manitoba Free Press*, 27 August 1901, page 4. The "royal reception executive committee" was made up of representatives of the Province, the City of Winnipeg, and other prominent citizens; its task involved planning for the visit to Winnipeg of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York in September 1901.
26. As recently as 1905, all three dailies had been located in downtown Winnipeg on McDermot Avenue, which was known as Winnipeg's "newspaper row." In 1905, the *Free Press* outgrew its space on McDermot and moved about two blocks south to Portage Avenue (at the corner of Garry Street). However, in 1907, all three papers were still within a short walk of each other. (The *Free Press* moved to 300 Carlton Street in 1913.)
27. For a detailed history of the origins of Canadian Press, see: M. E. Nichols, (*CP*) *The Story of The Canadian Press*, Ryerson Press, 1948.
28. *Ibid.*
29. John W. Dafoe, "Early Winnipeg Newspapers", in *A Thousand Miles of Prairie*, page 236.
30. *Ibid.*
31. See: Charles W. Gordon, *Postscript to Adventure, The Autobiography of Ralph Connor*, Farrar & Rinehart, 1938; and correspondence in the Charles William Gordon Papers, University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections.
32. "'Ralph Connor' to Speak Here", *The Washington Post*, 18 February 1917, page 6.
33. White House Appointment Book for Tuesday, 20 February 1917, Woodrow Wilson Papers, Library of Congress; Gordon, *Postscript to Adventure*, pages 294–302.
34. Marjory Lang, *Women Who Made the News*, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999, page 226.
35. "News Famine in Winnipeg: Improvised College Daily Only Paper in Manitoba City," *Editor & Publisher*, 22 January 1920, page 9. *The Manitoban* published as a daily from 19–22 January 1920.
36. "Winnipeg Jury Acquits Dixon in Strike Case", *The Globe*, 17 February 1920, page 11. See also: Jack Walker, *The Great Canadian Sedition Trials: The Courts and the Winnipeg General Strike, 1919–1920* (published as a joint project by the Legal Research Institute of the University of Manitoba and the Canadian Legal History Project; edited by Duncan Fraser), 2004, Chapters 17–18.
37. William Annand, ed., *The Speeches and Public Letters of the Hon. Joseph Howe*, John P. Jewett & Company, 1858, page 67.
38. "Southams Purchase Winnipeg Tribune", *MFP*, 23 June 1920, page 1; "Two Winnipeg Dailies Are Amalgamated", *The Lethbridge Daily Herald*, 16 October 1920, p. 16.
39. Charles Bruce, *News and the Southams*, Macmillan, 1968, page 99.
40. *Ibid.*
41. Letter from W. M. Southam to Sir Clifford Sifton, 25 October 1921; Sir Clifford Sifton Papers / LAC.
42. Letter from W. M. Southam to Sir Clifford Sifton, 2 November 1921, Sir Clifford Sifton Papers / LAC.
43. In *Canadian Newspapers: The Inside Story*, writer Heather Robertson recalled getting her first newspaper job with the *Free Press* in 1963, and then switching newspapers to work for the *Tribune*: "We all knew the fix was in. The editors never admitted it but there was a gentleman's agreement between the *Winnipeg Tribune* and the *Free Press* to preserve the status quo." (In Walter Stewart, ed., *Canadian Newspapers: The Inside Story*, Hurtig Publishers, 1980, page 134.)

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44. Bruce, *News and the Southams*, page 181.
45. Letter from E. H. Macklin to Sir Clifford Sifton, 21 August 1924, Sir Clifford Sifton Papers / LAC.
46. *Ibid.*
47. For a history of early radio in Manitoba, see Mary Vipond, "CKY Winnipeg in the 1920s: Canada's Only Experiment in Government Monopoly Broadcasting", *Manitoba History*, Autumn 1986, pages 2-13; Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* (Hansard), 27 April 1923, pp. 2785-2787; Frank W. Peers, *The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting, 1920-1951*, University of Toronto Press, 1969, pages 27-28.
48. Letter from Paul Dow of James Richardson & Sons, Limited to Mr. Edwards of the federal Department of Marine and Fisheries, 10 March 1927, from "Canadian Broadcasting, research files", part of the T. J. Allard Papers / LAC.
49. Letter from J. E. Lowry to Paul Dow of James Richardson & Sons, Limited, 16 March 1927, from "Canadian Broadcasting, research files", Allard Papers / LAC.
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51. Letter from James A. Richardson to Honorable John Bracken, 16 August 1927, Minister of Public Utilities Office Files, Archives of Manitoba.
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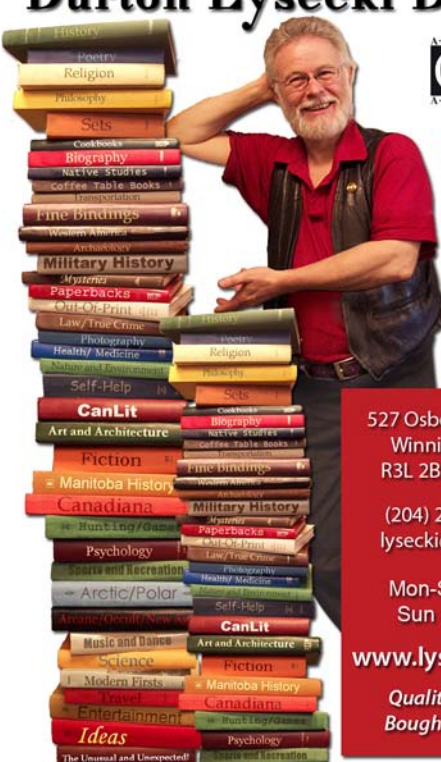
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GOLDEN WEST

Usually Live, Sometimes Local, Not Always First: Radio Journalism in Manitoba, 1922-1950

by Garry Moir

Manitoba's radio history contains many national "firsts," from broadcasting Canada's first radio coverage of a major news event to airing the first aboriginal language broadcast.

Broadcasting performs its most important function in transmitting the spoken word ... those who consider broadcasting should function as nothing better than a form of variety entertainment show a lamentable lack of vision.

Darby Coats

FIRST ANNOUNCER AND GENERAL MANAGER, CKY WINNIPEG

On the evening of 18 July 1922, hundreds of Winnipeggers flocked to the movie theatre. Chaplin was not scheduled to be on the silver screen; nor was Buster Keaton or Mary Pickford. No, on that particular night the patrons were there to hear the latest provincial election results via a mysterious new technology known as radio.

Only a few months earlier the *Manitoba Free Press* and *Winnipeg Tribune* had established their own radio stations, primarily to promote the newspaper business. Since relatively few Winnipeggers had their own receiving sets, the Lyceum and College theatres set up equipment allowing the public to listen to the returns as they wafted magically over the airwaves. The election turned out to be historic as the United Farmers swept to power, catapulting John Bracken to the Premier's chair—a position he would hold for more than twenty-one years. It was also a monumental night for broadcasting in that it was the first time in the nation's history that radio had provided full coverage of a major news event.

According to newspaper accounts, those first election broadcasts were a success. *Free Press* radio offered bulletins



Archives of Manitoba, Foote Collection 118, N1718.

Premier John Bracken, making a radio address, 1925.

throughout the evening to supplement four extra editions of the newspaper. The *Tribune* reported its more powerful station "maintained continuous transmission service from 5:20 until 11 o'clock. During [intervals between] returns and announcements interest was kept up by musical selections on the latest gramophone records."¹ The length of the broadcast itself was no small feat. Up until that time, the longest either station had stayed on the air was about two hours.

One politician, no doubt recognizing the public relations potential, managed to get himself on the air. Fred J. Dixon, a successful Independent Labour candidate showed up "and gave a brief address to electors over the *Tribune* radiophone."²

Radio was by no means the prime source of election information that night. The newspapers reigned supreme



Garry Moir has had a career in broadcasting that spans more than 40 years, and includes work at CBC radio and a number of other private radio and television stations. He has also served as a correspondent for Maclean's magazine, a contributor to Time, and broadcasting instructor at Red River College.

TIPS FOR FREE-LANCERS ABOUT CJOB

1. Staff of 24 men, average age 24½, all discharged from Canadian Services.
2. Two studios in the Lindsay building of the latest design. No two walls parallel to avoid reflected sound. All studio walls slanted outward, so sound waves are diverted upwards and absorbed in specially-designed ceiling. Ceiling is "wavy" to ensure sound being absorbed. Windows in studios are three plates thick, each one at a different angle. Studios are set on seven inches of acoustic rubber. They are "floating" rooms within rooms.
3. Control rooms are installed with new broadcasting equipment of latest design. Facilities for transcribing make it possible for one program to go on the air while another is being recorded.
4. Colors are unique and modern. As many as four colors are used in one room, mostly pastel shades of green, rose, blue and grey.
5. Record library of 9,000 recordings.
6. News every hour on the hour written 20 hours a day by staff of three editors.
7. Block programming, as used in Eastern Canada and the U.S.A., ensures 55 minutes of the same type of entertainment.
8. CJOB intends to build shows completely around local artists.



Winnipeg Press Club

A 1946 ad by CJOB Radio in the Press Club's Beer & Skits Program described its broadcast facilities in the Lindsay Building in downtown Winnipeg.

as thousands flocked to the *Free Press* and *Tribune* buildings to hear results blared out through a megaphone. Still, the new medium of radio had made its mark. Calls from people who had heard the broadcasts came from as far away as Manitou, Gladstone and Grandview. A Winnipeg judge called the *Tribune* to report "he had heard everything with perfect distinction and he considered the service all that could be desired."³

No longer were newspapers the sole source of information. Radio news had arrived. Over the next three decades, Manitoba would break much new ground in the development of broadcast journalism.

The *Free Press* and *Tribune* quickly realized that running their own radio stations was a costly and labour-intensive undertaking. By March of 1923, a deal was reached with the Manitoba government. The newspapers would get out of the broadcasting business. The Manitoba Telephone System would be in charge of radio, setting up a new

station known as CKY. It would be Canada's first publicly owned broadcasting station. The federal government, still trying to work out its own broadcasting policy, gave the Telephone System a virtual monopoly over radio in the province, plus a portion of the licence fees people who owned a radio receiver had to pay. No new stations could be set up without MTS approval.

Radio in the 1920s was very much in its formative stages. Stations were on the air only a few hours a day. Programming was a mish-mash of educational talks, farm markets, church services and the occasional drama. Music could range from opera to down-home country, almost all of which was performed live. While CKY did offer some newscasts, there was no formal newsroom or provision for news gathering. The news that listeners heard on CKY, and a CNR "phantom" radio station which shared the frequency, was mostly the same wire copy used by newspapers.⁴ It was not long, however, before local broadcasters faced fundamental journalistic decisions about balance and fairness.

CKY was barely on the air when it found itself in the middle of a bitter controversy involving the Winnipeg Grain Exchange and the newly formed, farmer-owned Wheat Pools. Wheat prices had collapsed at the conclusion of the First World War and the Pools represented a significant challenge to the way the Exchange did business. A publication called the *Grain Trade News*, with close ties to the Exchange, purchased time on CKY to broadcast farm markets and editorials trumpeting the virtues of the Exchange. Not to be outdone, the Pools purchased the time slot immediately following, to offer their version of farm news and to condemn all things connected with the Grain Exchange. As the rhetoric heated up, Premier Bracken jumped into the fray, suggesting that such programming on the government-run station be cancelled. The market reports continued, but the editorials ceased.⁵

Politicians were quick to recognize radio as a political asset, and for radio stations, making airtime available to Members of Parliament, MLAs and city councillors was easy, even if it did not always make for the most entertaining programming. For publicly owned CKY there was the obvious risk of the station's being perceived as an arm of the governing party. One of the early policy decisions set out by station manager Darby Coats dealt with that very issue. In an unpublished manuscript cited by historian Mary Vipond, Coats explained his policy:

CKY's microphone must be available to all political parties on the basis of equal time and equal payment ... on the day prior to an election free and equal time would be allowed for each of the local candidates to state his or her platform in a period to be arranged. The order of introduction at the microphone would be that in which the candidates arrived at the studio.⁶

This was almost certainly the first attempt by a broadcaster to spell out some basic journalistic policy.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, radio very much deferred to newspapers when it came to covering news events and digging out stories. By 1928, the Manitoba government had established a second station in Brandon with the call letters CKX. Much of the programming originated in Winnipeg. By this point CKY was offering two newscasts a day, with news and mining reports at 12:15 and 4:40 in the afternoon. Each ran approximately 15 minutes. In 1936, three newscasts were heard on CKY, with the most popular being provided by the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, the national radio network formed in 1932 and forerunner of the CBC.

Publicly run radio now also had a private competitor. Winnipeg businessman James Armstrong Richardson, dissatisfied with the way radio served rural Manitoba, had found a way around the Manitoba Telephone System monopoly. He set up a studio in Winnipeg's Royal Alexandra Hotel and a transmitter in Fleming, Saskatchewan, only three miles from the Manitoba border. Programs were sent out by telephone to Saskatchewan and transmitted back into Manitoba. The new station was known as CJRW and would later become CJRC, and then CKRC.

The news heard on all stations tended to be wire copy or stories gleaned from the newspapers and read by a staff announcer. None of the stations had anything resembling a formal newsroom with newscasters and reporters. CKY did offer editorial opinion in the form of commentaries by long-time newspaperman C. E. L'Ami.

From time to time listeners would voice their opinions about what they heard on the air. "While we all make mistakes," wrote one listener to CKY, "that does not excuse some of the blunders we hear, many of which must be attributable to simple ignorance, or to be less harsh, inexperience. Announcers should be versatile, familiar with the best of good literature, and should have adequate cultural background."⁷ Another listener complained about a lack of local content. "All of the circle this letter speaks for agree that international news gets far too much prominence. We think the international should be cut short and we should hear more of the everyday occurrences in our own province."⁸

For the most part, however, Manitobans seemed quite satisfied with the service radio was providing. A survey done by CKY in the mid-1930s cited news as the most popular program. In reality, radio was offering a great deal of information, although not always formalized into any kind of specific content packages. The latest farm market reports and mining news were regular features. News about the latest developments in agriculture was coming via "talks" by professors at the Agricultural College.

In March 1938, St. Boniface City Council passed a resolution thanking CKY for its role in "gaining support and sympathy" for the victims of an apartment fire on Provencher Avenue.⁹ On at least one occasion, radio was involved in not only reporting a crime but helping solve it. CKX radio, in co-operation with the RCMP, broadcast

a description of two horses alleged to have been stolen. According to an account in the *Manitoba Calling* magazine, "twenty minutes after the announcement went on the air the Mounted Police made an arrest fifty miles from Brandon, this result being directly attributable to the Brandon station's contact with a wide audience."¹⁰

Developments to the north saw radio taking more new strides in the dissemination of news and information. In 1937, a group of businessmen was able to start a small station in Flin Flon with the call letters CFAR. Soon after that, an Anglican minister came up with the idea of putting together a short program in the Cree language. The Reverend Ray Horsefield had taught himself to read and write Cree and had even obtained a special typewriter with Cree syllabic keys. The fifteen-minute segment offered fishing and trapping news and other information relevant to life in the north. The program known at the time as "TeePee Tidings" was believed to be the first aboriginal language broadcast in Canada.¹¹

A pivotal year for the development of local radio news came in 1939 because of two events. The first was the Royal Visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. The second was the outbreak of war.

CBC threw huge resources into coverage of the Royal Visit. Only three years earlier, CRBC's J. Frank Willis demonstrated just how dramatic live radio coverage could be as he reported on the collapse of a mine in Moose River, Nova Scotia in which one man was killed and two were rescued. At that time Willis was the only employee the CRBC had east of Montreal.

For the Royal Tour, close to 100 CBC staffers were assigned to the broadcast team.¹² The King and Queen arrived in Winnipeg in pouring rain. CKY and CJRC, by now both CBC affiliates, devoted their entire day to Royal coverage. There were live reports from the Canadian Pacific Station and the Legislature, but the highlight of



Government House Collection

The King's Speech. On 23 May 1939, King George VI gave a speech to his subjects throughout the Commonwealth using radio broadcast equipment at Government House in Winnipeg.



Archives of Manitoba

CBC reporter Maurice Burchell covered the 1950 flood in downtown Winnipeg from a rowboat.

the Victoria Day visit was a speech to be made by the King to the entire Commonwealth. For weeks in advance, CBC and CKY engineers had been setting up a makeshift studio at Government House next to the Legislature. All broadcast telephone lines, wiring and other equipment were duplicated in an effort to prevent technical failures. The tiny studio had only a single desk and a chair. On the desk were two gold-plated microphones. Only one would actually be used but the other was ready to go in the event the first one did not work.

The speech was timed to begin at exactly one o'clock so that it could be heard at 8 pm in England. The King, who had long suffered from a severe stutter, spoke to a potential audience of 500 million people and by all accounts, the event went off without a hitch. It was an enormous technical feat for radio coverage. Much of what was learned during the Royal visit would be invaluable when it came to covering the war.¹³

The Second World War marked the first time radio would seriously challenge the supremacy of newspapers. Although severely censored, radio news became a must-listen. With Canadian troops on the front lines, there was a need and demand for news as never before.

In 1940, the CBC made the decision to establish its own radio news service with four regional bureaus, including Winnipeg. A young newspaper reporter named William Metcalfe was lured from the *Free Press* to head up the Prairie division. He was given a total of one week's training in writing for radio. In his autobiography, Metcalfe recalled New Year's Eve, 1940. Not one to pass up a party, he celebrated throughout the night. At about 4 AM he left a downtown restaurant and trudged through the drifting snow on Portage Avenue to the CBC studios in the Telephone Building on Main Street. Not having been to bed yet, he sat down at his typewriter and pounded out the first prairie regional newscast aired by the CBC news service.¹⁴

Radio newscasts would run 15 minutes, three or four times a day. The main source was British United Press Wire copy, all of which was rewritten. Bert Dentry, one of the first CBC news staffers, estimated he and two other writers would produce up to 24-thousand words per newscast.¹⁵ Once written, the news was handed off to a deep-voiced announcer who would read the copy over the air in the proper tone. The war presented endless challenges when it came to pronunciation, as on-air staff were faced with foreign names and places many had never heard of. The CBC, in its wisdom, offered the following advice:

Consult the best available authorities and pronounce foreign names with such an approximation to correct pronunciation that will leave the announcer free from the charge either of conscious superiority or careless ignorance.¹⁶

Well-intentioned sentiment, but of limited value when announcers were faced with names like Ypres or Pieter Sjords Gerbrandy.

Radio stations CKY, CKRC and CKX in Brandon were by now firmly ensconced as CBC affiliates and picked up many CBC and BBC newscasts. These stations were also, however, moving to establish a greater news presence. In the late 1930s, CKRC had hired a veteran newspaper reporter named Ev Dutton who would become known as the dean of western radio journalism. At CKY, a broadcaster named Dudley Patterson was beginning to hone his skills as a newscaster. He would eventually be one of the best known news voices in the city.

Several locals made names for themselves as war correspondents reporting directly from the front lines. A truculent young lad named Stewart Macpherson could not get a job interview at any Winnipeg radio station. He took a cattle boat overseas and got a job as a hockey broadcaster and war correspondent for the BBC. In 1942, he was voted "male voice of the year" by the British public, edging out another well known war figure named Winston Churchill. CBC Winnipeg's John Kanawain was another correspondent who reported on numerous battles. The following dispatch from Kanawain during a mission over the North Atlantic speaks volumes as to how war correspondents perceived their duty:

We had been instructed to wipe out enemy submarines and destroy them ... The submarine hunt was already on. The Sutherland would dive on it, the front gunner would wipe out the deck guns crew, and depth charges would be shot out and down to it. ... I felt a strong and justifiable thrill of joy, for I was in a Canadian manned aircraft guarding these precious sea lanes without whose control Britain could not survive.¹⁷

Wartime technology would bring changes to the way news was presented. Magnetic wire recorders allowed for

the recording of sound directly from the fighting. Bombs exploding, sometimes heard in correspondents' reports, were the real thing—not sound effects. With sound, radio could bring an immediacy and authenticity to news reporting never experienced before. The CBC's London bureau outfitted a van with recording equipment that would follow the troops. By the end of the war, CKY had its own mobile device, modelled on the CBC unit, which travelled around Manitoba.

Radio and newspapers co-existed in an uneasy relationship. For the most part, broadcasters were not highly regarded by their print colleagues. Indeed, the newspapers could make some valid arguments for their frustration. Radio, after all, was a competitor, but at the same time, depended heavily on print journalists to produce much of the news heard on the air. A front-page newspaper story could be rewritten and broadcast over the airwaves often before the paper was ever delivered to the front step of a subscriber. This was a bone of contention that existed for years.

For a short time, Canadian Press established a policy that no wire service copy would be available if radio news was going to be sponsored by advertisers. Radio stations were quick to point out there was no shortage of advertising in a newspaper. The Winnipeg Press Club refused to allow broadcasters as members until the mid-1950s, in a battle that pitted two brothers and prominent media personalities against each other: broadcaster Jack Wells was for it, *Tribune* journalist Eric Wells was against it.¹⁸

The economic boom that followed the end of the war brought new radio stations and more innovations in news coverage. In 1946, a young entrepreneur from Alberta arrived in Winnipeg with visions of starting his own radio station. While John Oliver Blick had little money, he was able to convince a group of local business leaders to invest in his dream. On 11 March 1946, CJOB went on the air.

Blick and his staff composed exclusively of war veterans, turned radio news on its head. CJOB was the first radio station in Manitoba to stay on the air twenty-four hours a day, providing newscasts every hour on the hour. This was a first in Canada and eventually became standard practice in the presentation of radio news. "Working for Winnipeg" was the station's motto, which translated into an emphasis on local news coverage. Whether it was a fire, a traffic accident or even a bank robbery, CJOB's highly visible news cruiser was on the scene, often providing live reports.

One of the newsroom's biggest challenges came only six months after the station went on the air. Civic Election Day was 22 October 1946 in Winnipeg, and CJOB management decided the station would provide results directly from City Hall where the votes were being counted. It would be the first time a radio station would not depend on a wire service or newspaper to provide election numbers. Newspaper advertisements announced a "Special Broadcast Tonight" and "Men and Microphones

Move to the Tabulation Room in City Hall for Flash Election Results."¹⁹

It was no small undertaking for engineer Reg Drurie and the CJOB news staff. Telephone lines had to be arranged, while news director Alan Bready, announcer George Kent and other news staff had to come up with a plan to keep the broadcast going until the results were definitive. As the results were posted, Kent read them live over the air. While the broadcast no doubt contained the usual glitches that are part of live election coverage, the concept worked. Within two years, CJOB had established itself as the "go to" station for breaking news and in so doing carved a base that would ensure its lasting success. In time, CJOB would lay claim to the largest audience share of any radio station in North America.²⁰

While CJOB was working to establish itself as Winnipeg's news leader, radio history was being made east of the Red River in St. Boniface. After years of effort, francophones finally received permission to start their own radio station. CKSB went on the air in May 1946, and for the first time in Western Canada, news and programming were provided in the French language. The newsroom focused on issues affecting the local francophone community and served as a training ground for young francophone journalists, many of whom would go on to very successful careers. Among those who worked in the CKSB news room were Rene Chartier, who would become a senior adviser to Premier Ed Schreyer, newscaster Leo Remillard, who rose to become director of CBC radio for the Prairie provinces, and Maurice Arpin who emerged as one of Canada's most prominent lawyers and a close confidante of Premier Duff Roblin.²¹

The final two years of the decade witnessed still more changes in the Manitoba radio landscape. After years of jurisdictional infighting, Ottawa announced a policy that would bar provincial governments from owning commercial radio stations. As a result, Manitoba was required to sell the two radio stations it owned. CKY was purchased by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and



Winnipeg Press Club

Radio was the only link to the world for some residents of Winnipeg during the flood of 1950. CJOB founder Jack Blick was, at one point during the flood, the only broadcaster on the air.

became CBW. CKX in Brandon went to a private group headed by local businessman John Craig. In less than two years, a new CKY was back on the air, this time a private operation set up by broadcast mogul Lloyd Moffat. As the calendar was about to turn on a new decade, there were six radio stations in the province. Each had its own news director and small staff dedicated to providing news and information on a regular schedule. Yet, on New Year's Eve 1949, Manitoba's radio journalists had no idea what they were about to face or how vital their reporting would become.

The 1950 Manitoba flood was local radio's finest hour. A heavy rain on 5 May pushed the swollen Red River to the limit. Eight dikes protecting the city of Winnipeg gave way to the pressure of the waves. Already, most of the Red River valley south of the city had been evacuated. Now Winnipeg was headed for a full-scale disaster. The province was about to launch the biggest mass evacuation in Canadian history. Although radio stations were no more prepared for the magnitude of the flood than anyone else, they adapted quickly and became the vital communications link in the battle against the raging Red.

From the moment the dikes broke until the crisis had passed, every radio station in Winnipeg went on the air 24 hours a day. Brigadier R. E. A. Morton urged Manitobans to keep their radios on constantly as the military took over the flood battle. More than a few radio employees were facing threats to their own property, while CJOB and CKRC saw their transmitters inundated by the flood waters. Simply staying on the air became a struggle of gargantuan proportions. Local newspapers even gave radio its due. The *Free Press* carried a page-three story describing the service radio was providing which included:

Urgent calls for volunteers, appeals for food, requests for cars, and when the situation grew more critical—thousands of personal calls. ... Offers of accommodation from relatives all across Canada, long lists of telegrams piling up for untraceable Manitobans, pleas for dike workers to return home to evacuate their own families—and for teenagers whose parents have not seen them in days.²²

When the worst was over, radio's efforts did not end as all stations played an integral part in raising money for victims of the flood. It is safe to conclude that radio came out of the flood with a trust and prestige it had never held before. The work done by Manitoba radio in the 1950s became a model for the way other emergencies were covered—events such as the blizzards of 1966 and 1986, and the “flood of the century” in 1997.

In only a quarter of a century, radio had come from being a novelty to a daily source of information for a large portion of the Manitoba population. Over time, a Winnipeg

diaspora would impact broadcasting in both Canada and the United States. Brian Hodgkinson, who joined CKY in the 1930s, would become one of the top news voices in Cleveland. Stewart MacPherson emerged as a senior journalist at WCCO, a CBS affiliate in Minneapolis. During the Second World War, CKY hired a young broadcaster named Earl Cameron. Canadians would come to know him as anchor of CBC national television news. Bill Metcalfe left radio to become managing editor of the *Winnipeg Citizen*, *Winnipeg Free Press* and the *Ottawa Journal*.

Throughout the 1950s, 1960s and into the 1970s, virtually every radio station had a full-service newsroom. While small by newspaper standards, stations during this era made considerable effort to gather their own news. As the industry evolved, stations narrowed their focus to attract a specific target audience. News, talk and information programming became a format unto itself. The theatre patrons of 1922 would have been proud. 🌀

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Toasts and Tumult: The First 35 Years of the Winnipeg Press Club

by Sheilla Jones

The Winnipeg Press Club's 125 years of history started in the rough and tumble competition among Winnipeg's newspapers in 1887, and the first history written about the club's early years paints a picture of the personal, political and media challenges of that time.

It was a bitterly cold winter night when Winnipeg's newsmen gathered to elect officers for the newly formed Winnipeg Press Club. The publishers, editors and reporters braving -39°C temperatures met 12 February 1887 in rooms they had already acquired in the new Winnipeg City Hall. The "gingerbread" building had extra rooms in the upper level that were being made available to various organizations and, as reported in *The Manitoban* the following Monday, the newsmen had set themselves up nicely. "The clubrooms in the city hall have been nicely furnished and carpeted and are exceedingly comfortable. As all kinds of games, etc. have been provided the press boys are not now at a loss how to spend an evening."¹

The election of officers that Saturday night was a raucous affair, according to a brief description in the *Manitoba Free Press* the following Monday.

There was a large attendance of the city pressmen, and great interest was taken in the election, which was conducted on the American plan of everyone voting, without nominations, for whom he pleased, a majority being necessary to elect.

There was a keen fight for the presidency between Mr. T. H. Preston and Mr. Acton Burrows. They tied on the first ballot; but on the second Mr. Preston won by a majority of two. Mr. Preston took the chair amidst cheers. Mr. W. E. MacLellan was elected vice-president on the sixth ballot. The other officers elected were: Treasurer, A. McNee; secretary, C. W. Handscombe; executive committee, G. A. Flynn, John W. Dafoe, A. P. Wood.²

Thomas Preston was the publisher of the *Daily Sun* (also known as *The Manitoba Sun*) in 1887. Like many newsmen of his time, Preston got into the news business at a young age. He was only 13 when he was taken on at an Ontario paper as a "printer's devil." Preston later recalled, "as a lad not quite 14 years of age I entered, as the custom then was, the door of journalism as a printer's devil in the office of the

Woodstock Sentinel. It was my duty to light the fire, sweep the floor, twirl the roller on an old Washington handpress, turn the crank for the power press on publication day, fold the papers, deliver routes, paste bills, and incidentally set type—for all of which I received the munificent sum of \$20 the first year, \$40 the second year, \$60 the third year, and \$80 the fourth year, and the privilege of boarding with the boss."³

Preston worked his way up through the ranks of the newspaper business to the position of night editor of the *Toronto Globe* in 1881, and then moved to Winnipeg to take over the *Daily Sun* in 1882.

Acton Burrows, Preston's competition for the position of Press Club president, was the editor of *The Manitoban* and the Deputy Minister of Agriculture in the Manitoba Conservative government under Premier John Norquay. His political leanings and those of the *The Manitoban* were hardly a secret, and the fact that he drew an annual salary of \$2000 as deputy minister while editing what the Liberal opposition under Thomas Greenway called "the Government organ, the 'Manitoban',"⁴ had the opposition calling for Burrows to be turfed from his government job.⁵ Burrows resigned from the government job in 1887.

Vice-president of the new club, William Maclellan, was a lawyer by profession, but in 1887, he was the managing editor and chief editorial writer of the Liberal *Manitoba Free Press*. Maclellan had a reputation of being a brilliant editorial writer. He was so good that he is said to have written editorials for both the Liberal *Morning Free Press* and the Conservative afternoon *Manitoban*, unbeknownst to the newspapers' publishers, "refuting his own arguments twice a day. He performed his double duties successfully until one of the editorials [did not appear] in the Free Press, and though his contentious viewpoint failed to appear in the morning edition, his rebuttal appeared in the afternoon edition of the *Manitoban*. He left town shortly after."⁶



Sheilla Jones is a former CBC news editor and reporter who spent many years as regular "talking head" on CBC Newsworld. She served on the Winnipeg Press Club board in the 1990s, worked backstage at Beer & Skits, wrote satire for the show, and chaired the 60th anniversary revue in 1993. She is an author and also reviews books for The Globe and Mail and the Literary Review of Canada.

Archibald McNee, who was elected treasurer, was a veterinarian turned journalist who worked his way up the ranks at the *Manitoba Free Press* to become managing editor. Secretary Charles Handscomb was a bon vivant and man about town whose role as the *Manitoba Free Press* theatre critic brought him into close contact with the theatre crowd in general and with C. P. Walker and his wife Hattie.⁷

The three newsmen making up the Press Club's executive committee were George A. Flynn, A. P. Wood and John Dafoe. The 20-year-old Dafoe had just moved to Winnipeg from Ottawa, where he had served a short stint as editor of the *Evening Journal*.⁸ (Dafoe would later serve as a *Free Press* editor from 1901 to 1944.) Flynn left the *Sun* later in 1887 to become city editor of the *St. Paul Dispatch*.⁹

The first order of business for the newly formed Press Club in 1887 was to organize a party and then get to work on lobbying to change the province's libel laws. On 7 March 1887, Charles Handscomb threw a Press Club party at his home on William Avenue, on the occasion of his birthday. It was reported the next day in the *Manitoba Free Press*, "Nearly all the journalists of the city were present, and they were right royally treated by their host, who is one of the most popular members of the club ... Another pleasant feature of the evening was the presentation to Mr. Handscomb by Mr. Preston, on behalf of the Press Club, with a handsome gold ring, set with a diamond, as a tangible expression of their feelings towards him."¹⁰

Preston, as a publisher, was keenly aware of the risks of libel action against newspaper publishers. By 1887, so many newspapers in Winnipeg had been born and died that the city was becoming known as the "graveyard of journalism." The threat of financial loss due to malicious law suits was a real concern, and the Press Club was set to advocate for tightening up the provincial laws. On 17 March 1887, the Press Club's efforts were noted in *The Sun* (Preston's newspaper). "The Manitoba Press Club will take up the question of amendments to the law of libel with a view to action at the approaching session of the legislature."¹¹

Preston made the case that while newspapers can make mistakes, there had to be limits on libel suits. "[W]hen statements are made without malice, and upon reasonable foundations, in the discharge of a public duty, or in the

ordinary routine of business, that may subsequently prove to be inaccurate, the publisher should have a certain amount of protection, and more particularly against persons who, having nothing to lose, institute a civil proceeding against him in the hope of [taking] him in a substantial win for damages. In many cases of the latter kind, where the plaintiff entirely failed in his action, the publisher has been unjustly compelled to defray the costs. This certainly is a great wrong."¹²



Archives of Manitoba, Personalities, Preston, T. H.

Thomas Hiram Preston (1855–1925) came to Winnipeg in 1882, as Night Editor of the *Sun* newspaper, later becoming Managing Editor of *The Manitoban* and, still later, of the *Manitoba Daily Sun*. He was the first President of the Winnipeg Press Club, in 1887.

The Canadian Press Association was taking a similar action in Ontario, and Preston advocated the same kinds of changes for Manitoba. These included requiring complainants to put up some money to cover costs in case they lost the case; requiring a demonstration of malice before a suit could proceed; and allowing a publisher, upon learning of an error, to publish a correction at the first opportunity, which would then serve as a bar to libel action.

"[W]hilst libel suits against newspapers have fortunately not been numerous in Manitoba," wrote Preston, "the newly-formed Press Club cannot put its name to a more practical advantage than by taking precautions to provide that actions of this kind shall not be encouraged by the loose provisions of the law."¹³

There was some urgency in attending to the libel issue as the Manitoba Legislature was to resume sitting on 14 April 1887. The *Manitoba Free Press*, which was under the direction of founder William Luxton, added its suggestions, including requiring

a publisher to put up a surety when a newspaper is established because not all papers could be counted on to not abuse their power. "Among newspapers as among individuals there are many poverty-stricken, rib-stabbing sheets that from time to time pour out their irresponsible and slanderous attacks upon citizens who are almost utterly without redress. If the law of libel were so amended as to make such ventures give security for their actions the public would be greatly benefitted, and the press would be rid of some of the foul sheets that ruin private character and degrade journalism."¹⁴

Acton Burrows took up the call for action in his new newspaper *Morning Call*. (*The Manitoban* had folded.) In the 20 April issue of the two-day-old newspaper, the Editor-in-Chief (Burrows) pointed out that changes to libel laws to



Gordon Goldsborough, personal collection, 2005-0098

The Winnipeg Press Club occupied rooms on the third storey of the “Gingerbread City Hall”, built between 1883 and 1886, and demolished in 1964.

protect publishers were being pushed in many American states, including a provision in the bill before the Ontario Legislature that would give publishers of daily newspapers three days to print an apology, with “ten clear days” allotted to weekly newspapers.¹⁵

The Winnipeg Press Club efforts were successful, with the Manitoba Legislature agreeing with almost all the recommendations put forward. The amended libel law was passed on 10 June 1887.¹⁶

In the meantime, the club executive had been busy organizing a big dinner on Saturday, 9 April, in the dining hall of the CPR station at Main and Higgins streets. The dinner featured a number of guests, including several prominent businessmen, a few city aldermen and the American consul. A report on the dinner was published in the *Manitoba Free Press* on the following Monday.

“In order to give the newspaper men of the city the entirely novel sensation of paying for a ticket to a banquet the Press Club held a dinner on Saturday evening at the C.P.R dining hall. It was also felt that it would be a pleasant thing to bring together all the members of the journalistic profession in the city, which would tend to increase the

esprit de corps, which usually marks journalists, however antagonistic they may be in the practice of their profession. Although the unpleasant weather kept a number away, about thirty men, either now or in the past, actively engaged in newspaper work, sat down at the table—a good showing for a city of Winnipeg’s size.”¹⁷

The 1887 dinner, which was to be the first of many, set the tone for future dinners. It was an evening of good food, speeches, singing and a bounty of toasts—fourteen in all, with each requiring a reply. City Alderman Stewart Mulvey and US Consul Taylor both gave speeches reminiscing about “Journalism as It Used to Be” in the early days of newspapers in Winnipeg and Cincinnati.¹⁸ (Mulvey had arrived in Winnipeg with the Wolseley Expedition in 1870, and bought a newspaper, the short-lived *Manitoba Liberal*, the next year. The Mulvey newspaper was the only one to escape unscathed during the election riots of 1872. Taylor had been a newspaper editor in Cincinnati in the 1840s.)

The Press Club elected a new executive on 8 January 1888: Hon. Presidents William Luxton and Acton Burrows; President Archibald McNee; Vice-President A. P. Wood; Treasurer John Dafoe and Secretary Charles Handscomb.¹⁹

In 1888, the club organized a reunion of Winnipeg's newspaper men at Clougher's English Chop House at 375 Main Street, an even more dramatic and toast-filled evening than the club's first dinner. The 31 March event, reported in considerable detail in 1888 and reprinted in the 1955 WPC Yearbook/Beer & Skits Program, "will always be a memorable event in the history of Northwest journalism. It was the first reunion of all the newspaper men of the present and the past. Very few of the old timers who were in the city failed to put in an appearance; and the chief event of the evening was the recounting by them of events in the early history of Manitoba journalism. It gave a wide scope to the speakers and they made the most of it; it was the opinion of all that they had never heard happier after dinner speeches."²⁰

The evening was filled with toasts and replies to the toasts. On a sad note, however, the keynote speaker of the evening, William Coldwell, was too ill to attend the dinner. His talk, read to the audience, detailed the challenges of setting up the first newspaper in Winnipeg, the *Nor'Wester*. Veteran *Free Press* newsman George Ham introduced the speech by citing Coldwell as "the father of journalists in this country and one of the best journalists Canada could boast of."²¹

(Coldwell's speech resurfaced when it was discovered by Gerald E. Brawn, the News Editor for the *Calgary Herald* in the 1950s, when Brawn was going through some personal papers of Colonel Young, the one-time publisher of the *Herald*. Young had kept a copy of Coldwell's speech from his days in Winnipeg. The papers were sent to the Press Club by former member Allen Bill, the managing editor of the *Herald*, and the speech is reprinted in this issue.²²)



Christopher Dafoe, personal collection

A young John W. Dafoe, circa 1885, not long before he arrived in Winnipeg to work as a reporter at the *Manitoba Free Press*. He was elected to the Press Club executive in 1887.

Graveyard of Journalism

The speakers at the 1888 Press Club dinner paid tribute to the Winnipeg newspapers of the past. "Every one knows that there is a very large journalistic graveyard here, but few have any conception of the number of dead journals planted in it."²³

And there were many. Between 1859 (when the *Nor'Wester* began publishing) and 1884, 32 news-

papers were started in Winnipeg, and by the end of 1885, a grand total of one daily and four weeklies remained.²⁴

It should be remembered that Winnipeg was an isolated settlement when Coldwell arrived in 1859. In 1856, a writer from the American *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* described the settlement in bleak terms: "Deserts almost trackless, divide it on all sides from the habitations of civilized man. ... Receiving no impressions from without, it reflects none. It sends forth neither newspapers, nor books, nor correspondents' letters; no paragraph in any newspaper records its weal or woe."²⁵

George Ham, who arrived in Winnipeg as a hopeful young reporter in 1875, described Winnipeg as a "muddy, generally disreputable village" of about fifteen-hundred people that "straggled along Main Street from Portage Avenue to Brown's Bridge, near the present site of the City Hall, and sprawled between Main Street and the river. It was without sidewalk or pavements; it had neither waterworks, sewerage nor street lights. The nearest railroad was at Moorhead on the Red River, 222 miles away. Its connection with the outer world was one, or possibly two, steamers on the Red River in the summer, and by weekly stage in winter. It boasted telegraph connection with the United States and Eastern Canada by way of St. Paul, during the intervals when the line was working. Although essentially Canadian it was practically cut off from direct connection with Canada."²⁶

Ham quickly got work at the *Free Press*, but found his reporting job to be challenging, especially "on wintry days, when the mercury fell to forty degrees below zero, and the telegraph wires were down, and there were no mails and nothing startling doing locally, it was difficult to fill the *Free Press*, then a comparatively small paper, with interesting live matter. A half-dozen or so drunks at the police court only furnished a few lines, nobody would commit murder or suicide, or even elope to accommodate the press, and the city council only met once a week; but we contrived to issue a sheet every day that was not altogether uninteresting."²⁷

Ham tried his hand at publishing, setting up the *Daily Tribune* in 1879 by taking over the *Daily Times*. The venture folded after six months, contributing two more names to Winnipeg's "graveyard of journalism."

But the Press Club was about more than dinners and toasts to by-gone newspapers. Its members had a keen interest in baseball. In July 1888, the Press club team of "ball thumpers" took on the city telegraphic fraternity in what was described as "a deadly struggle for supremacy on the baseball field."²⁸

In its first 18 months of existence, the Press Club established a number of traditions that it has maintained through much of its 125 years. Put simply, it was "beer, business and baseball," in that order.

Trying Times

The Press Club got off to a strong start, but it was not long before the club found itself on shaky ground, mainly because of uncertainty going on in the Winnipeg newspaper

business. Nonetheless, the club held an election for officers on 15 January 1889 for 1889/90, with President George Ham, Vice-President John Dafoe, Treasurer A. P. Wood, Secretary Charles Handscomb, and an executive committee of Walter Payne, R. L. Richardson and William Perkins. A majority of the new board was from the *Free Press*. The club, it was noted, “has run down somewhat during the last year, but the members intend infusing new life into it, and a prosperous year is prophesied.”²⁹

That was, perhaps, a little too optimistic. The *Manitoba Free Press*, under the direction of Luxton, was aggressively acquiring competing newspapers. In February 1889, Burrows’ *Morning Call* was taken over, and in January 1890, Preston’s *Sun* was absorbed by the *Manitoba Free Press*.³⁰ When the *Free Press* bought the *Sun*, it also bought its wire service franchise, which then gave the *Free Press* a monopoly over national and foreign news arriving by the CPR telegraph. Preston left Winnipeg for Brantford in 1890, having already been elected a Liberal MPP in the Ontario legislature.³¹ Burrows stayed in Winnipeg and became editor of the monthly *Nor’West Farmer*,³² established in 1889.

For a short time in 1890, the *Free Press* had a local monopoly, but then on 28 January 1890, R. L. Richardson, the city editor of the *Sun*—who was out of a job because of the *Free Press*—pulled together what was left of the *Sun* equipment and started up the *Tribune*.

In the midst of all the turmoil in the newspaper business, the Press Club put a one-line notice in the *Free Press* on 22 and 24 March 1890 stating, “The Winnipeg Press club has retired from active operations.”³³ It is likely that the club gave up its rooms at City Hall at the same time.

But you can’t keep a good club down. The Press Club baseball enthusiasts continued to play ball, calling all the city’s baseball players to the club quarters in September 1889 to see if they could pull together a “strong aggregation of ball thumpers” to send to Grand Forks for a baseball tournament.³⁴ And in July 1891, the press club ball team challenged the theatrical troupe, the Corner Grocery Company, to a rematch when they arrived to perform in Winnipeg. The thespians “had defeated the Press club in an interesting and humorous baseball contest” the summer before, and the newsmen were anxious to redeem themselves.

The Press Club had lost its amiable president George Ham when he was hired by CPR president W. C. Van Horne in July 1891 to be a spokesman for the CPR, working out of Montreal. The CPR was at the centre of a firestorm in Manitoba, where the Liberal government of Thomas Greenway was seen as being in bed with the CPR and the *Free Press*. The contentious William Luxton defied the Liberal slant of the paper and loudly criticized the CPR. As a result, he was booted from the *Manitoba Free Press* in 1893, and soon after started his own Conservative-leaning newspaper, the *Daily Nor’Wester*.

A commentary in the Conservative weekly, the *Morden Monitor*, lauded Luxton’s new paper in a demonstration of the heated rhetoric in the politics of the news business of that era. The fact that Luxton had thwarted the control of

the *Free Press*, said the commentary, provided “a thrill of pleasure to think that the unholy combination of the corrupt Greenway government and CPR with its mealy-mouthed and sycophantic *Free Press* with all their power and gold, cannot in this free country cover up the unexampled rapaciousness of one and the thieving corruption of the other.”³⁵

It may well have been difficult, if not impossible, for the Press Club directors—Dafoe and Payne from the *Free Press*, Ham from the CPR, Richardson from the *Tribune*, Luxton from the *Nor’Wester* and Burrows (a close friend of Van Horne³⁶) from the *Nor’West Farmer*—and their fellow reporters and editors, to set aside professional and political rivalries in the name of the Press Club’s *esprit de corp* during such highly emotional times. It’s not clear who was on the Press Club board during this time, but it continued hosting events.

The link between the theatre and the Press Club remained strong, perhaps because Charlie Handscomb, who enhanced his bon vivant status with annual trips to New York to see the latest shows,³⁷ provided an on-going connection between the two worlds. Handscomb ventured into publishing in 1898, starting up *Town Topics*, a weekly magazine devoted to coverage of the arts, society news, and sports. C. P. and Hattie Walker were said to be investors in Handscomb’s magazine, and Hattie wrote for it as well.³⁸

The Press Club organized a number of visits to the theatre, and in November 1900, the Press Club staged a joint theatre and baseball dinner at the Vendome Hotel to celebrate the end of the baseball season. It was an opportunity for the newsmen for “hours of pleasant respite from the usual arena where political issues, press dispatches, scoops and bad proofs are wont to hold sway, the occasion being the celebration of the successful termination of the Winnipeg Press Club baseball season.”³⁹

On 26 October 1901, the Press Club’s baseball wrap-up event was held at the city’s exhibition grounds. “Not only will a record for the climate of Manitoba be made by holding a ball game the last week in October, but to-day’s outing promises to be of the most enjoyable of the many outings held by the newspaper folks. The street cars run to the grounds and those not having bicycles or automobiles are expected to take the cars in time to be ready for action by 3 o’clock sharp.”⁴⁰



Winnipeg Press Club

Robert Lorne Richardson (1860–1921), founder and publisher of *The Winnipeg Tribune*.

Toasts and Tumult

Meanwhile, Press Club members, including George Ham, William Maclellan and Thomas Preston, were organizing a banquet in the fall of 1905,⁴¹ and the “Press Club nine” celebrated another year on the diamonds, with Charles Handscomb playing shortstop and Maclellan in right field.⁴²

A Press Club for Women

The membership in the Press Club was strictly limited to men in the news business, and excluded others employed in getting the newspapers out, such as pressmen and advertising salesmen. No women were allowed. While there was little news published in the newspapers about the men’s Press Club in Winnipeg at the turn of the last century, women journalists, with women’s rights and temperance issues at the fore, were coming into their own.

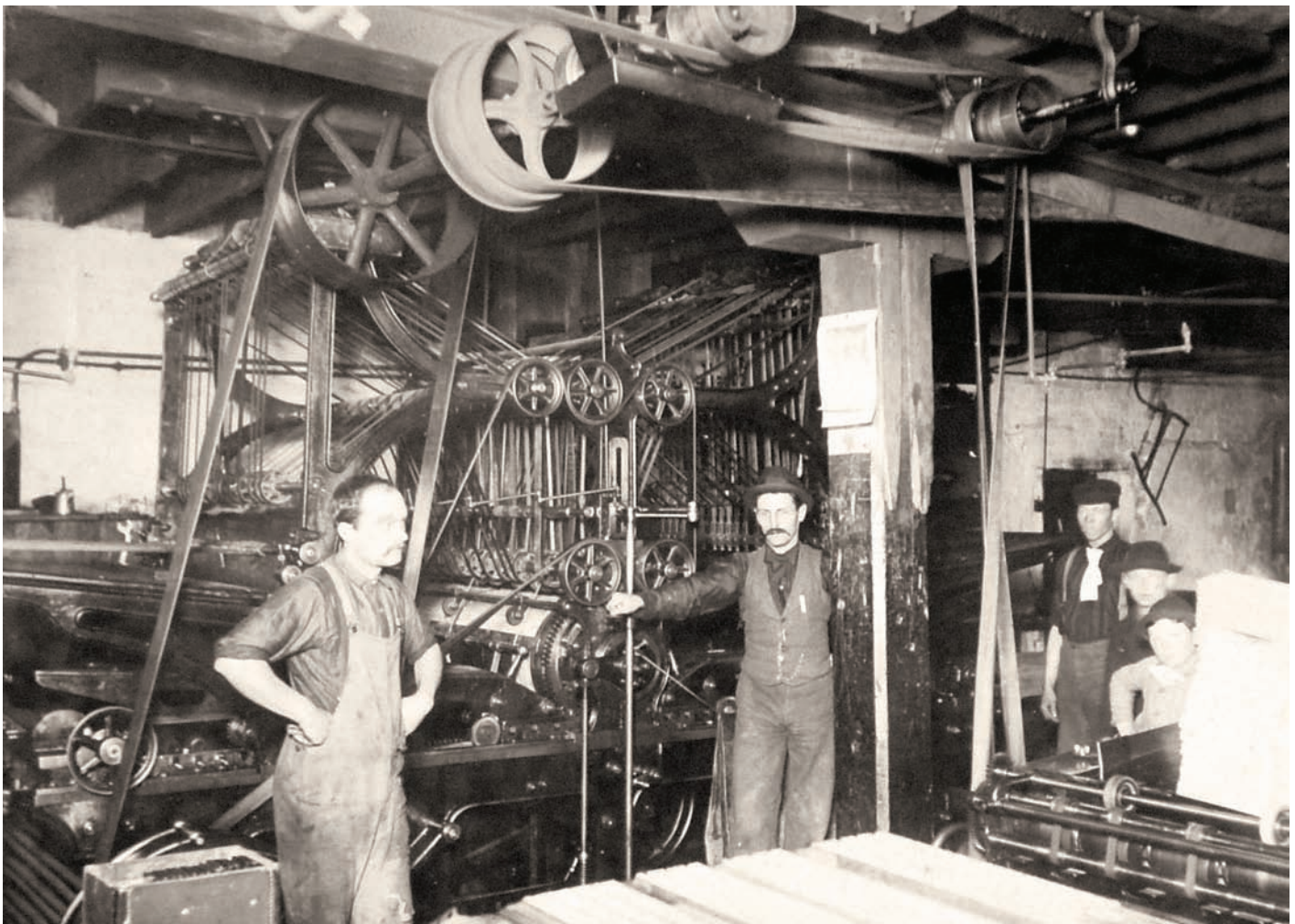
In June of 1904, writer Margaret Graham marched into George Ham’s CPR office and demanded an audience. Graham, said Ham, “started cyclonically to tell me that while the C.P.R. had taken men to all the excursions to fairs and other things, women had altogether been ignobly ignored and she demonstratively demanded to know why

poor downtrodden females should thus be so shabbily treated.”⁴³

Ham told Graham that if she could organize sixteen women journalists for the trip to the upcoming St. Louis World’s Fair, the CPR would provide a car for them. Graham did and she, along with Mary Markwell (Kate Simpson Hayes) of the *Manitoba Free Press* and fourteen other women, made the trip to the expo, and on the way back, formed the Canadian Women’s Press Club.⁴⁴ Ham was given the position of honorary member, the only man to hold that honour. Winnipeg’s women journalists wanted a club of their own as well, and in 1907, formed the Winnipeg chapter of the CWPC, with *Free Press* farm reporter Cora Hind as president, and *Free Press* editor Lillian Beynon as secretary. The Winnipeg Women’s Press Club set up their own club room in 1912 in the Industrial Bureau at Main and Water streets.

Winds of Change

Part of the social glue that held the Press Club together weakened in 1906 with the unexpected death of Charles Handscomb. He was only 39 when he died suddenly



University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Winnipeg Tribune Archives

The Winnipeg Tribune press room in 1896, equipped with what is likely the equipment that publisher R. L. Richardson salvaged from the *Sun* when it was bought out by the *Manitoba Free Press*.



Reminiscences of a Raconteur

George Henry Ham (1847–1926) arrived in Winnipeg in 1875 and took a job as a journalist with the *Manitoba Free Press*. Within four years, Ham had started his own newspaper, the *Tribune*. In 1880, it merged with a foundering rival, the *Times*, and Ham became Managing Editor of the new *Winnipeg Times*. He ran the staunchly Conservative paper until it was sold in 1885. He was a founding member of the Manitoba Historical Society.

of diphtheria,⁴⁵ but he'd played a key role as Press Club secretary right from the first board election in 1887.

From 1907 onwards, the *Manitoba Free Press* contained regular mentions of the various activities involving the Canadian and Winnipeg women's press clubs, but the men's press club was largely invisible. Then, on 22 March 1910, the *Free Press* ran a one-line announcement stating, "The Winnipeg Press Club has retired from business."⁴⁶ The women's press clubs bloomed during the years leading up to the Great War; the men's did not. However, many organizations put their activities on hold during the war years. There were more pressing priorities.

With the war years behind them, Winnipeg newsmen regrouped. Frank Williams, a *Manitoba Free Press* reporter, was getting the Press Club going by signing up newsmen as members at the *Free Press* and the *Winnipeg Tribune*, the only dailies operating in the city by the end of 1920. Williams later recalled that he almost lost his job getting the club going because *Manitoba Free Press* management thought he was signing up newsmen to start a union. Said Williams, "My answer to that was to beard ... John W. Dafoe in his den and sign him up as a member."⁴⁷

The Press Club organizational meeting was held in the *Tribune* building so it wouldn't look like the *Free Press*

was trying to dominate the club. Hay Stead of MacLean Publishing was elected the president in 1922,⁴⁸ and the newsmen got busy organizing a dinner at the Fort Garry Hotel. The club was back in full swing. Williams recalled in 1953 that all the Press Club records from earlier times were all lost, and the club operated as if it had not existed prior to 1922.

Few of the original Press Club directors were around to carry the torch for the early Press Club, with the exception of John Dafoe. The club's first president, Thomas Preston, lived in Brantford where he served in the Ontario Legislature until 1908, became president of the Canadian Newspaper Association in 1923, and died of a heart attack two years later.⁴⁹ Acton Burrows moved to Toronto in 1895 and set up his own magazine publishing company. He remained there until he died in 1935.

William Maclellan, who had left Winnipeg under a cloud in 1887, had set up a law practice in Duluth for a few years, then returned to his hometown in the Maritimes in 1900, and was editor of the *Morning Chronicle* in Halifax until his return to Winnipeg in 1905.⁵⁰ He later returned to Halifax to become an author and school inspector. Archibald McNee left Winnipeg in 1889 and moved to Windsor, Ontario.

William Luxton sold his interest in the *Daily Nor'Wester* to the Winnipeg News and Publishing Company in 1896 but stayed on until 1898 after the *Nor'Wester* became the *Telegram*, and then went to work at the *Globe* in St. Paul, Minnesota. Luxton returned to Winnipeg in 1901, and died of apoplexy in 1907.



Library and Archives Canada

George Ham (WPC president, 1889) with women reporters on their way to the St. Louis Expo in 1904. On the trip home, the women formed the Canadian Women's Press Club. Standing directly in front of Ham is *Manitoba Free Press* women's editor Kate Simpson Hayes.



Manitobans As We See 'Em, 1909-1909

Cartoonist Hay Strafford Stead (1872–1924) worked at the *Manitoba Free Press*, *Winnipeg Telegram*, *Winnipeg Saturday Post*, and *The Winnipeg Tribune* until 1922, the same year that he served as president of the Winnipeg Press Club.

expressing most sincere desires for his recovery, but it had been otherwise ordered. He leaves a memory fragrant with the kindnesses that thousands have received at his hands.”⁵¹

The news of Ham’s death was (to quote Mark Twain) “greatly exaggerated,” as Ham continued a career where his travels on behalf of the CPR took him farther and farther away from Winnipeg. He did, however, maintain his close relationship with the Canadian Women’s Press Club, and often travelled with the women on their international trips.


R. L. Richardson kept the *Tribune* going, but also had a political career to consider. He was elected to Parliament in 1896 to represent Lisgar. In 1920, Richardson sold the *Tribune* to the Southams, who then also bought the *Telegram*, and the two papers were merged as the *Tribune*. At that point, there were only two daily newspapers in Winnipeg, the *Free Press* and the *Tribune*, and it stayed that way for the next 60 years.

By 1922, the old order was gone and a new era had begun for Winnipeg journalism and for the Winnipeg Press Club. ✎

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42. *MFP*, 18 October 1905, page 1.
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Reaching for the Stars: The Middle Years of the Winnipeg Press Club

by Sheilla Jones

The story of the middle years of the Winnipeg Press Club is best told in pictures, provided largely by club members who were noted news photographers.

The Winnipeg Press Club found its feet after it was rejuvenated in 1922, and by the time the annual Beer & Skits got underway in 1933, the club had become part of the fabric of the city. Club events often rated a mention in daily newspapers, perhaps because the newspaper editors were typically on the club's executive and didn't mind giving the club a little free publicity.

The club raised its profile by hosting dinners starring well-known guest speakers. In 1924, for instance, the club hosted Prime Minister Mackenzie King, who had once been a reporter for a number of Toronto newspapers, including *The Globe*.¹ King noted the WPC event in his diary for 4 November 1924. "... the Press Club of Winnipeg tendered us a reception. We met all the members present, about 75 or 100. Made a short speech referring to trip and days on the Toronto papers, was given a good reception."²

During the Second World War years, the Press Club held public events as well. One of the members in the 1950s recalled, "Speakers of international renown were brought here, and on every one of these the club made money. We packed the Civic Auditorium on many occasions, and we gave the public value for its money at fifty cents per seat."³

Of particular note is the Press Club dinner honouring retiring *Winnipeg Free Press* editor John W. Dafoe, celebrating his sixty years in journalism. It turned into an international event. Public figures and journalists from across Canada gathered at the Royal Alexandra Hotel on 16 October 1943. It also attracted Vories Fisher, photographer of *Life* magazine, and four men from the National Film Board. As the *Free Press* reported in the Monday edition, "Modern camera appliances, including Klieg lights, kept the room in alternate light and dusk, and a public address system carried the speakers' voices until it was turned off during the CBC broadcast which gave Dr. Dafoe's address over the national network."⁴

In his speech, which aired live on CBC Radio, Dafoe recalled the influences of some of his early colleagues at the *Free Press*, such as editor Archibald McNee, who had urged him to come to Winnipeg, his "chief" Walter Payne, and William Luxton, founder of the *Free Press*. Luxton was, said Dafoe, a man whose "language was the most explosive I ever heard" but who was, nonetheless, "a generous square-shooter".⁵

In a measure of the Press Club's esteem for Dafoe, the members present unanimously voted to award him an honorary lifetime membership in the club, thereby relieving him of paying membership dues he had been paying almost every year since being a founding board member in 1887.⁶ (The benefit for Dafoe was short-lived as he died four months later.) Dafoe reminded the journalists in the audience that, whether they were aware of it or not, they were writing history. "I would suggest to any young newspaperman that he take special notice of the historic value of the news he is handling. It is all in the day's work at the time. You write an article, and it goes into the paper, and that is all there is to it—at that time. But you must remember you are

dealing with history; you are dealing with things that are a turning-point in the history of your country."⁷

Journalists are still writing history, as they were then. The Press Club stayed in the public eye and became part of the historical record, particularly during the club's busy middle years from the 1950s to the 1980s, thanks to members such as columnists Gene Telpner (WPC president 1963) and Jimmy King (WPC president 1985).

Many news photographers were members of the Press Club, including Lewis Foote, Hugh Allan (WPC president 1958) and Les Doherty (WPC president 1957), and that meant there were lots of pictures being taken. The Press Club also recorded its affairs in the Beer & Skits programs, which also served as the Press Club's yearbooks from about 1951 through to the early 1980s. The following pages combine the photo and yearbook history of the club as it grew and sought to reach for the stars.



University of Winnipeg, Western Canada Pictorial Index 39844

John W. Dafoe, at the Winnipeg Press Club testimonial dinner at the Royal Alexandra Hotel in Winnipeg, honouring his 60 years in journalism. Dafoe's speech after dinner aired live on national CBC Radio. At left is long-time friend Edgar J. Tarr. On right is Lt.-Gov. Roland F. McWilliams.



Winnipeg Press Club

UPSTAIRS DOWNSTAIRS

Rooms for the Club

61 Steps

In the 1950s, members in the Main Street club rooms had to climb the dreaded 61 steps up to the bar. These two unidentified rumps are rumoured to be Eric Wells of the *Winnipeg Tribune* (WPC president 1953) and brother Jack Wells of CJOB Radio.

Winnipeg Press Club members had very nice quarters in the brand new City Hall in 1887, but that only lasted a few years. After that, the newsmen met at restaurants or members' homes. Or they held events at various restaurants and hotels, such as the baseball wrap-up parties at the modest Vendome Hotel or grand dinners at the upscale Fort Garry Hotel.

The newsmen—and now radio men—found a place of their own in 1953 in the Northern Life Assurance building at Main and Graham streets. But to reach the 3rd-floor club meant climbing a lot of stairs... 61 to be exact. It was up to the younger and fitter members to haul cases of beer up all those stairs for the club's bootleg operation. With a \$15,000 mortgage from Eaton's, the club was able to turn their rooms into a model of modernity.



University of Winnipeg, Western Canada Pictorial Index 39849

In 1961, the club opted for a more accessible location, this time down the marble staircase to a new club room with a licensed bar in the basement of the Marlborough Hotel. The furniture remained much the same, but with its brick and beams, the club looked more like a traditional men's club.

It was time to move again in 1971, this time up to the mezzanine level in the hotel. The club's beautiful stained-glass windows made it a most attractive location for the men—and now women—members from newspapers, radio, and television. For the official opening in 1972, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau performed the ritual christening of the club. The club presented him with an engraved pewter stein, and he used it to pour beer on the carpet, thus signalling the club was officially open.



University of Winnipeg, Western Canada Pictorial Index 57513

Two unidentified reporters interview Major General W. Macklin in the Press Club rooms downstairs in the Marlborough Hotel, circa 1962.

In 1972, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau "christens" the floor of the Press Club with his beer, under the approving eye of WPC president Dave Bonner.

The club returned to the Marlborough basement for a few more years before giving up its club rooms for good in 2007. The Press Club once again meets in hotels, restaurants and bars.

Rivals find common ground at the Press Club. Competing editors share a chuckle at the Press Club in 1975 over the first 1945 edition of the joint *Free Press/Tribune* newspapers. Left, Gordon Sinclair (1951 WPC president), assistant managing editor of the *Winnipeg Free Press* and right, Eric Wells (1953 WPC president), managing editor of *The Winnipeg Tribune*.



Winnipeg Press Club



On this side, the *Free Press* ... (c1939)



And on the other, the *Tribune* ... (1957)

University of Manitoba Archives

THE NEWSPAPER wars

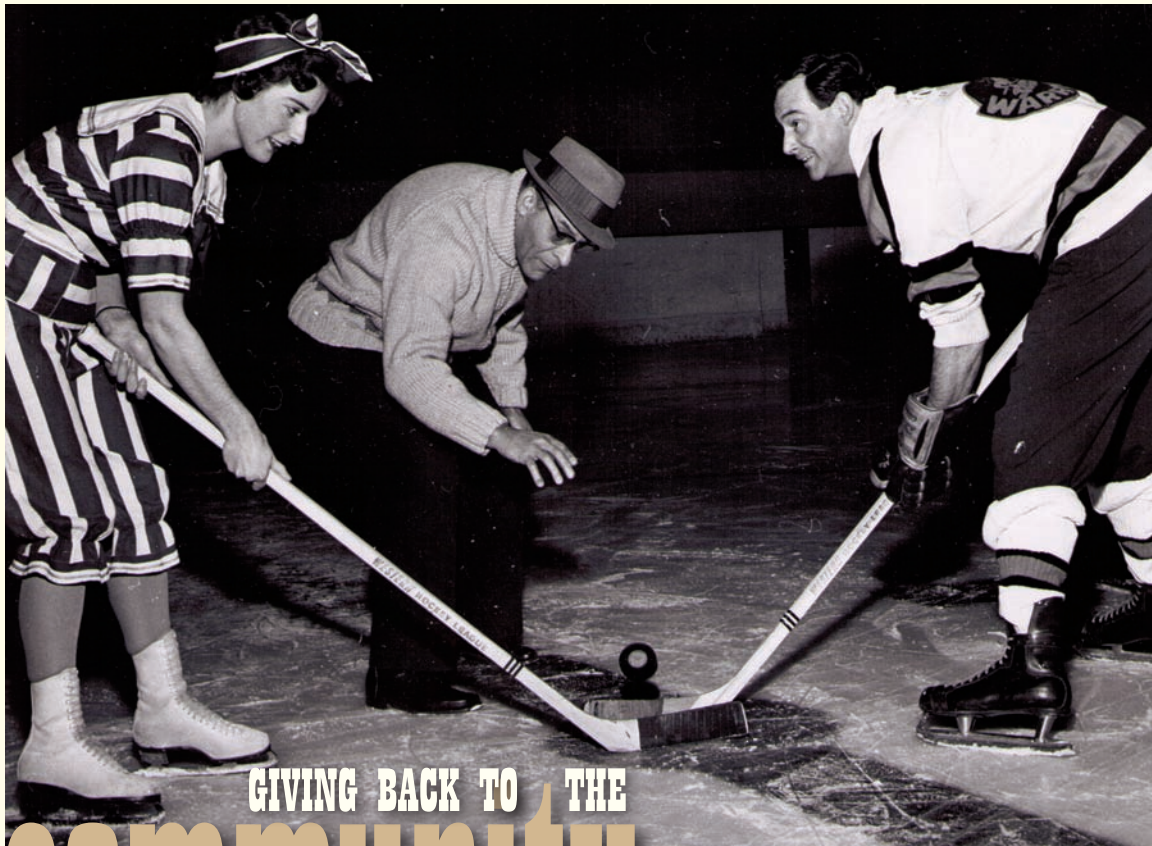
Press Club neutral ground for reporters

The Manitoba Free Press (founded in 1872) and *The Winnipeg Tribune* (founded in 1890) were bitter enemies, right from the start. Depending on the fierceness of the editor of the day, reporters caught fraternizing with the enemy risked being fired on the spot.

The Winnipeg Press Club was a safe haven ... neutral ground. *Trib* and *Free Press* reporters could share a story and a beer without fear of losing their jobs. It helped that the Press Club, after 1953, was just a short walk from both newsrooms in downtown Winnipeg.

The Free Press and *Tribune* were forced to call a temporary truce in 1945 due to a labour dispute with their typesetters. The two rivals put out a joint newspaper for several months ... after which the regularly scheduled newspaper wars resumed.

Schmockey Night hi-jinx. Facing off on the ice at Schmockey Night at the Winnipeg Arena, where Winnipeg Press Club members joined the media hockey team to do battle against the politicians' team, and raise money for Manitobans with disabilities.



Winnipeg Press Club

GIVING BACK TO THE community

Batting for Charity

Baseball has long been a part of Press Club traditions. In 1973, WPC formed its own baseball league, hosting the popular Knuckleball Classic slo-pitch tournament. This annual charity event combined the club members' enthusiasm for baseball and beer gardens with a desire to give back to the community. For 30 years, the charity tourney raised funds for numerous worthy causes in Winnipeg, particularly the Firefighters Burn Fund and the Lifesaving Society.



Winnipeg Press Club

A plaque commemorating Morris Duchov, founder of the Press Radio Scholarship Fund for Orphans, was unveiled at the Winnipeg Press Club. In 2011, it was donated to the Winnipeg Foundation.

The Winnipeg Press Club has a long history of giving back to the community, in big ways and in small, from organizing sports tournament awards to taking a pie in the face to raise money for the disabled.

The Press Club was an enthusiastic participant in the antics at Schmockey Night, an annual family fun night at the Winnipeg Arena. Many of the talented radio and news personalities who honed their comedy skills at Beer & Skits took to the ice against an equally talented team of city and provincial politicians, all to raise money for Manitobans with disabilities. In 1972, the Press Club was awarded the national Ability Fund Award. CJOB radio personality Cliff Gardner, a Schmockey Night original, accepted the award in Ottawa on behalf of the Press Club.

The Press Radio Scholarship Fund for Orphans was founded in 1954 by Morris Duchov, a popular Winnipeg restaurateur, with the help of the radio and print newsmen of the Press Club. Duchov wanted to be sure orphans like him got a good education. The fund endowment of \$150,000 that Duchov left to the Press Club went to the Winnipeg Foundation.

THE POLITICS of the Press Club

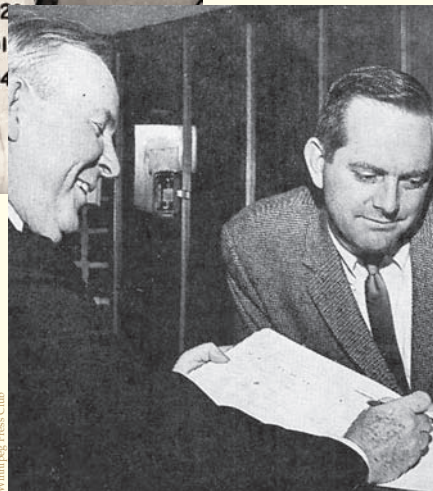


During the 1961 visit of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker to the Press Club, president Pat Burrage showed him the Tombstone in the Graveyard of Journalism—"30" denotes the end of press releases. Many of Winnipeg's early newspapers lived only a short time. By 1961, the only two surviving papers were the *Winnipeg Free Press* and *The Winnipeg Tribune*. The "Free" lives on, but the "Trib" went to its grave in 1980, and from its demise arose the *Winnipeg Sun*.

The Winnipeg Press Club entertained Canadian politicians of all stripes, from prime ministers such as Mackenzie King in 1924 and Pierre Trudeau in 1972, to premiers, mayors and a few Governors General.

The Press Club was certainly the place to be in the fall of 1961 and spring of '62 when all three federal party leaders became honorary club members. Conservative Prime Minister John Diefenbaker dropped into the club in September, and Liberal leader Lester Pearson showed up a month later, both receiving honorary Press Club memberships. Tommy Douglas, the newly anointed leader of the NDP, didn't get his honorary club membership until the spring of 1962, when he was the guest speaker at the club's 75th annual dinner.

A Press Club membership did not, however, bestow upon them great fortune. In the election of June 1962, Pearson failed to defeat Diefenbaker to become prime minister, though the Diefenbaker government was reduced to a shaky minority. Douglas failed to win a seat in Saskatchewan.



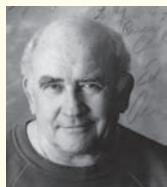
Liberal leader Lester Pearson signed the Press Club guest book as Bill MacPherson (WPC president 1955) looks on.



NDP leader Tommy Douglas spoke at the 75th annual Press Club dinner, in 1962.

Celebrity Central

The Winnipeg Press Club has always enjoyed a close relationship with the theatre community. In 1889, the Press Club joined forces with local thespians in a benefit show, staging W. S. Gilbert's satire "On Guard" at the Princess Theatre. It was not surprising that touring celebrities such as Charlie Chaplin could often be found dining and drinking with Winnipeg's newsmen.



Ed Asner

Actor Ed Asner, 1993.

Celebrities regularly dropped by when the Press Club opened its own clubrooms on Main Street in 1953. Charlie Mazzone, the owner of Rancho Don Carlos, the city's top nightclub, said he'd be happy to have his visiting celebrities stop in at the club.

The club directors liked the idea. As reported by the *Tribune*, "a quorum was quickly assembled by the club executive to discuss the deal and, as a result, Press Club members can expect to see among their guests Lena Horne, Rudy Valee, the Mills Brothers and their ilk." When the club moved to the Marlborough Hotel in 1961 it was conveniently



Winnipeg Press Club

Actor Larry Linville, 1994.



Winnipeg Press Club

Bill MacPherson (WPC president 1955) introduces famed photographer Yousuf Karsh to the audience at the 1953 Beer & Skits. Karsh was about to shoot a photograph of the audience from the stage. Unfortunately, that photo will not be found in any Karsh collection because it turned out that someone forgot to load the film into the old Speed Graphic camera.

handy to the Walker Theatre, the Concert Hall and other downtown venues.

Actors, comedians, authors, singers and even wrestlers brought music, stories and laughter to the club. Singers Juliette and Robert Goulet would drop by, and so would comedians Wayne and Shuster and musician Les Paul. Some of the more interesting guests included singer Maxine Ware (1955); comedian Dave Broadfoot, and R&B group Harry Douglas and the Deep River Boys (1957); TV's "Mr. Fix It" Peter Whittall (1958); pop group The Crew Cuts, entertainer Anita Bryant, country singers Homer and Jethro, and comedian Bud Abbott (1961); author Pierre Berton (1974); New York madam Xaviera Hollander and porn star Linda Lovelace (1975); wrestlers Gene Kiniski and Mad Dog Vachon (1984); and cartoonist Lynn Johnston (1989).



Winnipeg Press Club

Cartoonist Ben Wicks, 1998.



Winnipeg Press Club

Royal Canadian Air Farce members display their honorary Press Club memberships, 1993. L-R, Don Ferguson, John Morgan, Luba Goy, WPC event organizer Mona McClintock, and Roger Abbott.

THE message from media PROS

Debate

The Press Club provided a forum for journalists to debate issues of the day, sometimes featuring heated “bearpit” sessions. These enlightening debates allowed politicians to drop their gloves and journalists to speak frankly. Whether it was sharing the horrors of covering wars or clarifying the critical role the media plays during a hostage-taking, journalists shared the good, the bad and the ugly of their profession with each other.



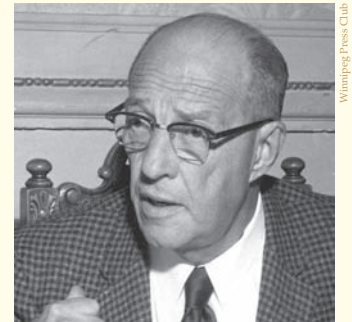
CNN’s Wolf Blitzer, 2004.



CBC hosts Adrienne Clarkson and Lee Major (WPC president, 1989).



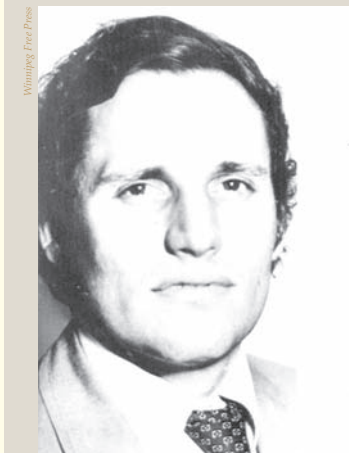
CBC foreign correspondent Joe Schlesinger, Eric Wells Foundation speaker, 1989.



Los Angeles Examiner editor Jim Richardson, 1958.



Harry Mardon (WPC president 1964) with Lord Devlin (British Press Council), 1963.



Washington Post reporter Bob Woodward, 1973.

Bob Woodward and colleague Carl Bernstein are two of the best known journalists in North America, helping win a Pulitzer Prize in the spring of 1973 for the *Washington Post* for their exposure of the Watergate scandal.

Woodward was at the Winnipeg Press Club in November 1973 as the fall-out from their investigation was sending shock waves through Washington. He expressed his concern at how the decline of investigative journalism in the media makes it too easy “for governments to lie to the nation”.

Epilogue: Politics, Sexism and the Old Days

The Winnipeg Press Club struggled through some trying times during its 125 years, particularly when it came to who could join the club and who was shut out.

It took significant persuasion of the Press Club members, dominated by publishers, editors, reporters and photographers from the *Winnipeg Free Press* and *The Winnipeg Tribune*, just to open the club to newsmen in the radio business. That didn't happen until 1953, and only after broadcaster Jack Wells put pressure on his brother Eric, who happened to be the club president in 1953.

Membership rules changed again in 1970, this time to allow women journalists to join, but it did not go down well with the men who didn't want to see their men-only enclave invaded by women. The sexism issue stirred up a political hornet's nest, both provincially and nationally.

In January 1970, Winnipeg MP Stanley Knowles protested the barring of women members by Ottawa's National Press Club, taking the issue to the floor of the House of Commons. Knowles was, however, greatly "vexed" when Ottawa reporters pointed out that the Press Club in Winnipeg also refused to accept women as members.⁸

The issue had made it to the floor of the Manitoba Legislature by June, when an opposition member challenged Premier Ed Schreyer about whether the NDP's new human rights bill addressed the kind of sex discrimination practised by the Winnipeg Press Club. Schreyer said he didn't think so, and added, "If the Winnipeg Press Club wants to continue being a mossback institution⁹, I say let them live in the past."¹⁰

The Press Club faced pressure from without in the form of women picketing outside the club and pressure from within from members who were quite happy to have women journalists join them. After much heated discussion, members voted 20 to 11 to admit women as members, on 8 October 1970.¹¹ At least one member was so bitter that he took out a classified ad declaring it was "a cruel and sad end to a glorious era."¹² There was still the sexism battle to be fought once again as the board running Beer & Skits drew a hard line against allowing women into the show, a battle that they eventually lost in 1984.

Expanding membership to include women turned out to be a good thing for the club. By the late 1970s, the membership had soared to well over 300 members, representing a significant slice of Winnipeg's media professionals putting the news in print and on the air.

But tough times lay ahead. The *Tribune* closed its doors in 1980, and was replaced by the *Winnipeg Sun*, but the *Sun* soon located a long way from the downtown in an industrial park. In 1991, the *Free Press* vacated the "Old Lady of Carlton Street" and moved out to the same industrial park.

The Press Club was no longer a handy place where journalists could stop off for a drink—although the Press Club baseball league kept the place hopping on many a night—and the pace and style of the news business had changed. People were also becoming more aware of the issues around drinking and driving, leading them to spend less time and cash at the club bar. It was getting harder and harder to sustain the finances of the Press Club and to pay for bar stock, to staff the bar and to cover the rent at the Marlborough. The pressure to keep the bar financially viable meant opening up membership to just about anyone willing to pay the membership fee. By the mid-1990s, the number of media professionals in the club had shrunk dramatically from the 1970s, so that it was not so much a "press club" as a social club with long media history.

The board in 2004 wanted to close the bar, which had moved back downstairs to its original location in the Marlborough, but there was still a strong desire among remaining members to keep it going. However, when financial reality (and the impact of the smoking ban) made it impossible to continue, the Press Club closed its bar and rooms in 2007. The Winnipeg Press Club was not the only press club in that situation. Many other

press clubs in Canada and the US shifted away from the expense of having their own club rooms and met instead in bars or restaurants.

In 2012, the Winnipeg Press Club—meeting in bars and restaurants—is celebrating its 125th anniversary, and looking back on a remarkable history of a club started by newspaper publishers, editors and reporters seeking to nourish a little collegial esprit de corps amid the cut-throat competitiveness of the news business—on a bitterly cold winter night in February 1887. ☞

Notes

1. Arthur Milnes, "Mackenzie King: The Young Journalist", *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, available on-line at www.revparl.ca/english/issue.asp?param=142&art=940
2. W. L. Mackenzie King, 4 November 1924, *The Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King*, Library and Archives Canada, page 362.
3. Frank H. Williams, 18 April 1953, WPC Yearbook/Beer & Skits program, page 10.
4. *Winnipeg Free Press*, 18 October, 1943, page 3.
5. *Ibid.*, page 3.
6. *Ibid.*, page 3.
7. *Ibid.*, page 3.
8. *Winnipeg Free Press*, 28 January 1970, page 1.
9. The term "mossback" refers to either an old turtle with moss on its back or a very conservative, old-fashioned person. The Press Club's newsletter later took the name "The Mossback".
10. *Winnipeg Free Press*, 19 June 1970, page 30.
11. *Winnipeg Free Press*, 9 October 1970, page 51.
12. *Winnipeg Free Press*, 10 October 1970, page 41.



Not all Press Club members were happy with opening it to women journalists, including one who took out an ad in the *Free Press*.

Beer & Skits and the Winnipeg Press Club: A Marriage Made in a Smoky Room

by Scott Edmonds

The Winnipeg Press Club's annual Beer and Skits show was often imitated by other clubs, but none achieved the longevity of the Winnipeg show, which remains the longest-running satirical revue in North American history.

For most of its more than 70-year history, Beer & Skits was the public face of the Winnipeg Press Club. It was a rouged, sometimes leering face, singing a bawdy song or telling a joke, often at the expense of politicians, judges or other members of the city's elite, who sat there and laughed or squirmed, with a smile perhaps, usually depending on whether or not they were the target of the pointed satire.

This public face was seen only once a year, in a satirical revue that drew newspapermen and amateur thespians together to clown on stage for a few hours of mayhem. But it became a significant part of Winnipeg's annual social calendar for much of the 20th century. It drew politicians, judges, lawyers and other movers and shakers, and not just to watch. At least two provincial court judges were active participants: Bob Trudel and Ron Meyers. Trudel was even president of the Press club itself in 1966.

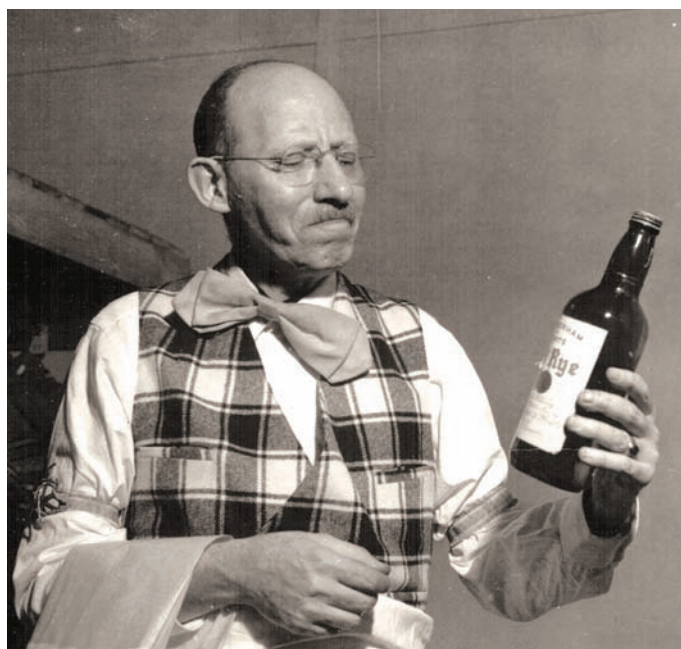
"The best of Beer and Skits is in its satire, and that requires two sets of players—those on stage with words they try to remember, and those in the pit with words they try to forget," wrote former Manitoba Chief Justice E. K. Williams.¹

Only in its last years did Beer & Skits admit women to what started as an all-male evening and it was billed simply as the Winnipeg Press Club "Smoker" when it debuted in the winter of 1933–1934. It didn't adopt the name "Beer and Skits" on its programs until 1945.

In 1988, in a history of journalism in Manitoba put together by a group of Press Club members and associates,



Scott Edmonds is currently a sports writer for the Canadian Press based in Winnipeg. He is also the Western Canadian vice-president of The Newspaper Guild-CWA. He is a long-time member of the Winnipeg Press Club and was active in Beer and Skits for many years until the late 1990s.



Winnipeg Press Club

Nathan B. Zimmerman (1898–1951), journalist and Beer & Skits co-founder, played a classic role in each show as the Beer Waiter. Zimmerman, often called "the spirit of Beer and Skits", produced it from 1933 until his sudden death just before the 1951 show.

Chris Dafoe recounts one version of how the event got its start. Its origins have always been a bit murky, although the main characters are clear enough: Nathan B. Zimmerman, a *Winnipeg Tribune* drama critic, and George Waight, an amateur actor and publicist for the Bank of Commerce, were the founders and for many years, the guiding lights of the show.

Old-timers argued for years about the origins of Beer & Skits, but it seems likely that the show grew out of social evenings once conducted in the Sock and Buskin Club, a meeting place for actors and newsmen across Rorie St. from the old Dominion Theatre. Neil LeRoy, an actor who participated in the original Beer & Skits shows, offered what he called the "official version" in a memoir published in 1977:

It was Nathan Zimmerman who proposed that the Sock and Buskin Club and the Winnipeg Press Club jointly produce an evening of satirical sketches. Thus, in 1934, Beer & Skits was launched.²



Winnipeg Press Club

Maestro Jimmy King (WPC president 1985), who regularly led the orchestra for Beer & Skits, tickled the ivories for *Tribune* managing editor Al Rogers (WPC president 1969, left) and *Tribune* sports writer John Robertson (right) at a rehearsal in 1962.

The Press Club in its early years was still in search of a permanent home. It didn't find one until 1953 on Main Street; so regular dinners and social functions were how it maintained itself as an institution. The early Smokers were held in the Picardy Salon on Broadway. Beer & Skits put on lots of shows at the Fort Garry Hotel, but the show probably had its longest and most successful run in the Skyview Ballroom of the Marlborough Hotel. It was also in the Marlborough, either in the basement or on the mezzanine, that the Press Club itself found its longest-lasting and most successful digs.

Nate Zimmerman was known simply as Zim and he set the tone for the show, or at least tried to while he lived. He died during a dress rehearsal in 1951.

"There shall be no smut, no religion and no women on the stage of Beer and Skits," was his dictum.

All except the last were pretty regularly flouted but, while Zimmerman was alive, offenders were regularly punished. Reporter Vic Murray was suspended for life for transgressing the religion rule, although he was pardoned after 15 years.

The show was a product of many hours of free labour. First, there were the writers who put together the script. Then there were the actors and directors who rehearsed the show for many weeks prior to the event itself. Then there were the stage volunteers who prepared the sets, with the stage backdrops designed for many years by *The Winnipeg Tribune* editorial cartoonist Jan Kamienski.

Beer & Skits was always a mixture of media people and those who just liked to act and sing but the presence of "celebrities" on stage was a big draw. In the beginning, of course, the word "media" didn't even exist for most people. Beer & Skits was the domain of newspapermen, although broadcasters were eventually admitted as well—male broadcasters, of course.

The show also featured live music and for more than 30 years, starting in the early 1950s, the band leader was well-known local musician Jimmy King, also a regular the club. The band members were the only paid performers.

The ban on women existed far beyond the point at which women were admitted to membership in the Press Club itself (1970). It became a point of friction between the club and the board of Beer & Skits but the board asserted its independence. The event, and particularly the ad-filled program that was produced, helped subsidize club operations. The amounts weren't huge but for an institution that often operated on a bare break-even basis, the money came to be important. Eric Wells, WPC president in 1953 and long-time B&S board member, noted that the show had generated \$120,000 in profits for the club by 1980. He

A galley proof for the program of the 1945 Beer and Skits revue at the Picardy Salon.





Winnipeg Press Club

The General. Local actor and Beer & Skits co-founder George Waight (1892–1985) in 1967, beside a portrait of himself in costume as the General, a role he played regularly. Waight directed B&S right from the start and, in 1953, he was the only honorary member of the Winnipeg Press Club.

remarked wryly, “The WPC is the only club to make money out of the performing arts.”³

Wells wrote in the 1980 show program that the first murmurs of discontent over allowing women in the show were heard around 1960. “The controversy continued in the club after the 1961 show, and brought this comment from Garnet Coulter, veteran Beer & Skitser, and long-time mayor of Winnipeg: “You can satirize a man before his peers, perhaps crucify him on occasion, but you can’t do either in front of his wife.”⁴

The show’s humour was often of the locker-room variety and the programs were, bearing in mind the dictates of the times, racy, even when the ads were produced by such staid institutions as Eaton’s.

Even before 1960 there were suggestions, some of that should change. The show itself had carried a fairly lighthearted attack on the ban against women in the program for the 1959 show, written by journalist and later playwright Ann Henry. “Men of Beer and Skits arise! Throw out your pin-up pictures, your thumbbed photographs and prove to the women you’re not a bunch of dirty-minded little boys afraid of life,” she wrote.⁵

The “dirty-minded little boys” resisted her blandishments and in 1970, the show’s program featured its first full-fledged, *Playboy*-style centrefold, a tradition that continued off and on for many years.

The show itself remained largely unchanged, although Zim’s rule was perhaps more often breached as far as language was concerned. It was a blend of skits and songs, usually focused on something that had made news during

the previous year. The songs were a mix of fresh lyrics, written for old standards or show tunes. Here’s a snippet from the 1934 show that satirized Premier John Bracken and the Attorney General W. J. Major scouting beer parlours to see if a law against serving sandwiches and beer was being observed. It was sung to the tune of “I’m Called Little Buttercup.”

“We’re Major and Bracken
And we’ll never slacken
Our efforts to drive out good cheer.”⁶

Here’s one from the 1994 show that features a song about city councillors and the mayor trying to raise money for projects in the city of Winnipeg by smuggling cigarettes. It was sung to the tune of Leslie Gore’s “Sunshine, Lollipops”:

Don't Know Where You Are? Then Find Yourself A Phone Booth

The Manitoba Telephone System has embarked on a program that will enable every outdoor telephone booth in Manitoba to function as a landmark as well as a communications facility.

The program will identify the location of all outdoor telephone booths by means of a sign placed in a prominent position within the booth.

An MTS spokesman said location signs would be especially valuable to emergency callers as well as to tourists who may not be familiar with their surroundings.

The spokesman said installation of location signs in the 188 Metro Winnipeg outdoor telephone booths is nearing completion. The program throughout the rest of the province

will include identification of booths along highways as well as those located in urban area. Completion of this phase of the program, which includes the placement of signs in some 265 outdoor booths, will be completed next year. MTS is the first telephone company in Canada to undertake a program to place location signs in all its outdoor telephone booths.



“I’M AT THE CORNER OF TELEPHONE AND TELEPHONE”



MANITOBA TELEPHONE SYSTEM

Winnipeg Press Club, 1969 Year Book, page 28

Booze, broads, and bickering. This ad from the 1969 Beer & Skits Program had fun with a plan by MTS to mark urban phone booths with their locations, as an aid to lost—and possibly inebriated—journalists. Other ads in the B & S programs were good-natured (and as viewed today, horribly politically incorrect) jabs between competitors: *Free Press* versus *Tribune*, Manitoba Hydro versus Greater Winnipeg Gas, and Eaton’s versus The Bay. Even Canada Post and government departments got into the act, and sometimes took heat over their risqué ads.

*“Craven, Export A and Menthol Matinee
It’s wonderful to sell ‘em all for city coffers (cough
cough)
Lighter than a Lucky Seven
Never fear the cash will appear, dear
And I’ll feel fine just to know the job’s still mine”*

The tension between the Press Club and Beer & Skits over admitting women—probably abetted to some extent by the declining interest among younger members of the media in taking part in the show—led those in charge to decide they would bring down the curtain with the 50th show in 1983.

“With this performance, Beer and Skits presents its 50th and final show ... The show ends in the spirit in which it began under the leadership of the late Nathan B. Zimmerman. Two members of the original cast, George Waight and Bill Metcalfe, are with us tonight. We salute them for starting us off on the long trail of 50 years of laughter, and from all of us to all of you – Thank You Gentlemen.” It was written by CJOB broadcaster Ron Hill, chairman of what they thought would be the last show.⁷

It wasn’t to be, however. Not long after the “final” show, *Winnipeg Free Press* writer Tom Oleson, who was WPC president in 1983, sounded out Ian Sutherland (WPC president 1973) about whether Beer & Skits would work with women in the show. Sutherland was sure it would, with the support of Ron Meyers, already a ten-year veteran of the show, and Tom Ashmore, the long-time writing chair. They got seed money from the Press Club and the show was back on. Don Comstock (WPC president 1971) was director of the first mixed show. He had a long history in vaudeville from his days at the Beacon Theatre, and coached the women who were new to the show on the art of skit comedy. Many of the veterans of the show were happy to return for the first show with men and women, both in the audience and on stage.

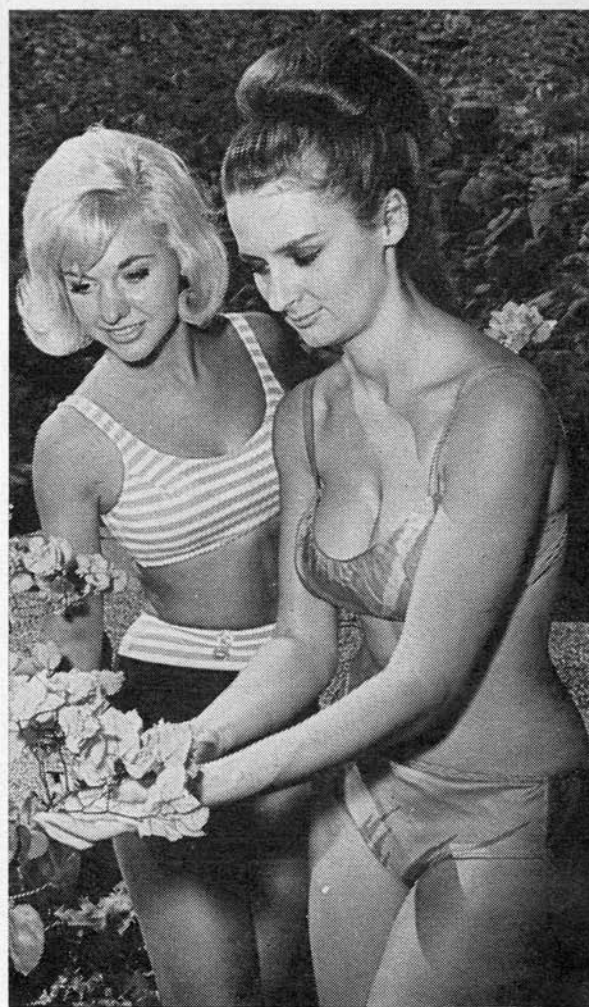
If anything, however, the show became even bawdier with the new cast, and there was no attempt to tone it down. The Zim rule was not only broken, it was tossed completely out the window. Even the centrefold in the program survived briefly.

But the show continued to offer what the audience had come to expect and, for the most part the audience kept coming, at least initially. There were no doubt some who dropped out but those who were being lampooned, generally invited to sit at the head table, continued to show up and laugh, as did many of the judges and lawyers and other prominent citizens who had been coming for decades.

Slowly, however, time did catch up to Beer & Skits. By the end of the first decade as a mixed show, it was harder and harder to lure new performers from the reporters and other media celebrities in the city. Increasingly, their ranks in the show were filled by people who had some talent but no public recognition.

That no doubt was at least partly responsible for a declining gate, although it may also have been simply that

*Keep your cotton pickin’
hands off my gin!*



Hell No! These girls can’t sing.
But neither can any of the female
Sexpots that Harry Smith books for
Club Morocco.

But if you want pure fun and
Not-so-pure women,
Make A Night Of It At

Club Morocco

573½ Portage Avenue

Only a stagger from the CBC Building

Winnipeg Press Club, 1969 Yearbook, page 70.

“Only a stagger from the CBC Building.” An advertisement from the 1969 Beer & Skits Program was clearly aimed at the lascivious element in the journalism community.



Winnipeg Press Club, 1969 Yearbook, page 11.

Cheesecake, beefcake, or stew? In the absence of female actors for the skits, men (often in outrageous costumes such as this one modelled by sportscaster Harold Loster) played the female roles.

the kind of entertainment provided was no longer sellable, perhaps because it was so widely available that it was no longer novel. Satire has become the staple of shows like “Saturday Night Live” and in Canada “This Hour has 22 Minutes.” Beer & Skits brought that to a local level but, like NHL hockey at the time, it didn’t seem to work financially.

Regardless of the reasons, the show had trouble making ends meet. The club could not afford to subsidize a money-losing institution, even one as venerable as Beer & Skits. The last show was held in 2005 but the story doesn’t quite end there.

Those who didn’t want the show to end decided to bring it back as the BS Comedy Players two years later and it continues to offer a somewhat similar blend of satire and song outside of the Press Club. But the media connection has now been completely severed.

In the Beer & Skits 1983 program, Reg Skene, then chairman of the theatre department at the University of Winnipeg, wrote about the show and how it grew out of a tradition of amateur theatre in the city in the 1930s that followed the collapse of commercial theatre during the Depression years. Beer & Skits outlasted others such as “Mud in Your Eye—A Spring Splash” which had featured many of those who would later be prominent in Beer & Skits. It’s not a bad epitaph, although in 1983 it was more

of a call to arms that led to the rebirth as a mixed show. Skene’s story starts by recounting the history of the satirical shows that preceded it and how the “Press Club Beer and Skits soon became the only one in town, and has maintained the satirical tradition in Winnipeg in the ensuing 50 years.”

“Considering its origin in the theatrical movement of the ‘30s,” said Skene, “it is interesting how much the satirical tradition that Beer and Skits has preserved influenced the theatrical revival of the fifties and sixties. *Mother Courage* and other weighty dramas aside, it was largely with local satirical revues that John Hirsh and Tom Hendry convinced Winnipeg that we could have a theatre with significant local input and relevance to our own lives. Satirical revues still stand out as the major achievement in original Winnipeg theatrical production. It is an important heritage, satisfying a significant Winnipeg theatrical hunger. It is a tradition which should not be allowed to die.”⁸ ❧

Notes

1. Christopher Dafoe, “The Press Club; Beer and Uplift.” *Torch on the Prairies. A Portrait of Journalism in Manitoba, 1859–1988*, 1988, page 6.
2. *Ibid.*, pages 4–5.
3. Eric Wells, “Unrepentant and Unreformed,” *Beer & Skits Program*, 1981, page 14.
4. Eric Wells, “Looking Backward,” *Beer & Skits Program*, 1980, page 25.
5. Ann Henry, “Open Beer and Skits to the Girls: Ann” *Beer & Skits Program*, 1959, page 8.
6. “Beer and Skits Builds a Tradition,” *Beer & Skits Program*, 1959, inside last page.
7. *Beer and Skits Program*, 1983, page 3.
8. Reg Skene, “Theatre Life in the City,” *Beer & Skits Program*, 1983, page 19.



Winnipeg Press Club, 1980 Yearbook, page 17.

Feminist bulls? This sketch by editorial cartoonist Jan Kamienski (c1924–2010) was a nod to women seeing red over their continued exclusion from Beer & Skits, as well as controversy over the overt sexism of the programs. Membership in the Press Club was opened to female journalists in 1970, but women were not allowed into Beer & Skits until 1984.



Winnipeg Press Club, 1968 Yearbook, page 14.

CBC can be funny! This CBC ad in the 1968 Beer & Skits program exhibits the kind of satirical humour that would one day lead to their hit shows "This Hour Has 22 Minutes" and the "Rick Mercer Report". The competing TV stations, CBC (Channel 6), CKY (Channel 7) and CKND (Channel 12) routinely took good-natured shots at each other in their ads in the B&S programs.

Winnipeg Women Journalists Have Always Led the Way

by Shirley Muir and Penni Mitchell

There were no press clubs for women in Canada at the beginning of the 20th century, but Winnipeg women journalists played an important role in changing that, and at the same time, played a key role on the national stage in advancing women's issues.

In November 1993, a handful of older women dressed in turn-of-the-century period costumes walked into Winnipeg's vintage Fort Garry Hotel. They were the last of the Ontario members of the former Canadian Women's Press Club. They had come to join over 100 delegates at the national Women in the Media Conference sponsored by the Canadian Association of Journalists, with the conference logo featuring Cora Hind, one of CWPC's founding members from almost a century earlier.

The CWPC representatives in their long dresses at the CAJ conference would be a constant visual reminder that women journalists of the 1990s were working in newsrooms thanks to the doors the CWPC had forced open. Sadly, many of the younger journalists present were still struggling to find their place in newsrooms across Canada. While they had gained access to entry-level jobs, they had still not found equality in newsroom management nor in management salaries. And that's what had brought them together in Winnipeg, 87 years after the first annual meeting of the Canadian Women's Press Club.

In 1906, 44 founding members of the CWPC had gathered in Winnipeg, two years after the organization was founded in 1904. The group's first national president



Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg Womens Press Club Collection

In 1912, the Winnipeg Women's Press Club had comfortable quarters in the Industrial Bureau at Main and Water streets. There, reporters and women's rights advocates like Cora Hind, Lillian Beynon, Nellie McClung, and Hattie Walker met to organize tea and strategy.

Kathleen Blake "Kit" Coleman, of the *Toronto Globe*, presided over the meeting.

The early Winnipeg journalists, who would become core members of the national Women's Press Club, founded their Winnipeg Branch a year later in 1907. Its members included: Cora Hind, agriculture editor of the *Manitoba Free Press*, who was known internationally for her accurate prediction of prairie wheat crop yields; writer sisters Francis Beynon and Lillian Beynon who would later become central figures in Wendy Lill's 1980s play *Fighting Days*; Kate Simpson Hayes, women's editor at the *Manitoba Free Press*; and Nellie McClung, who would help lead the charge for the vote for women in Manitoba in 1916.

With that bench strength it wasn't surprising that the CWCP activities remained based in the West for ten of the first 14 years, although many other cities had active branches, including Regina, Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver and Toronto. Later there were branches from Vancouver to Halifax.

The idea for the Canadian Women's Press Club came after women writers demanded (and received) access to



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Penni Mitchell is editor of Herizons, Canada's largest feminist magazine. She also wrote a weekly column for the Winnipeg Free Press for more than a dozen years.



Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg Womens Press Club Collection

The Canadian Women's Press Club gathered in Winnipeg for its first national meeting in 1906.

the free railway passes being offered by the CPR to male journalists covering the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. After buttonholing CPR publicist George Ham, 16 lady journalists (or presswomen, as they preferred to be called) travelled to the fair and, on their return, decided to form a professional association. After all, presswomen were barred from joining the all-male Canadian Press Club. Ham, a patron of the group, would continue to see that the women had free train travel to their conferences for the next several years.

The Canadian Women's Press Club was more than a professional club for women, however. It was also an early front for social, legal and political reform activity surrounding women's rights and plight.

In Manitoba, Lillian Beynon Thomas, a columnist for the *Weekly Free Press* in Winnipeg, told stories about abandoned wives and destitute widows who needed laws to give them the right to family property following death or divorce. She advocated for suffrage and other social reforms. Lillian Beynon Thomas went on to be an organizer of Women's Institutes and was secretary of the local chapter of the University Women's Club.

Francis Beynon took up journalism six years after her older sister. She was hired as editor of women's pages of *The Grain Growers' Guide* in 1912 after working in advertising at the T. Eaton Company. *The Grain Growers' Guide* helped galvanize women in rural communities to take up political causes, including homestead and dower rights. Although the concept of dower rights—a guarantee of a wife's minimum inheritance in a husband's estate—dates back to ancient Babylon and is mentioned in the Magna Carta, dower rights were nonetheless abolished in 1886 for women

settlers in the West who had established and built farms alongside their husbands.

In her columns, Beynon encouraged women to extend their empathy to others less fortunate. She wrote in a 1913 editorial that "We have too long been contented with the kind of motherhood that can look out of the window and see little children toiling incredible hours in factories and canning sheds over the way... and say calmly, 'Thank God, it isn't my children.'"

According to Linda Kay, author of *The Sweet Sixteen: The Journey that Inspired the Canadian Women's Press Club*, "They were very influential, prime ministers came to speak at their annual meeting, and they were a force."

By the 1920s, the Canadian Women's Press Club had more than 400 members. Membership peaked in the early 1970s at 700 members. At the club's 1971 general meeting in Toronto, it was decided to change the name to the Media Club of Canada. The Media Club celebrated its 90th birthday in Halifax in 1994 and lasted until the early 2000s. ∞



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The Walrus and the Journalist¹

by James A. Burns

Lore is not history, and differentiating between them is usually difficult, sometimes impossible. Where lies the truth?

The Winnipeg Press Club was established 125 years ago by the local newspaper fraternity, most of whom were journalists, recording history and telling stories. We may suppose they abided as best they could by what the late Eric Wells, Editor of *The Winnipeg Tribune*, espoused as “the eternal question”, i.e., “Is the story right?” To be sure, Press Club members’ raconteurial skills were often influenced by the level of beverage consumption, but Wells was ever vigilant to maintain accuracy. A stickler for truth in reporting, he must be given the nod, and we his readers must accept his version of history (vs. lore) in the following item, because there are *almost* no other written records of these transactions. Even the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives is mute with respect to the Company-related events that follow.²

“The time has come,’ the Walrus said, ...” These words from Lewis Carroll’s stories about Alice in Wonderland make an appropriate introduction to this story. Indeed, the time has come to try to explain how the Winnipeg Press Club (WPC) came by a prize of dubious value to anyone but a walrus, and a male walrus at that.

The object is a singular chunk of bone—a penis bone. Call it what you will, the scientific word for the bone—which is peculiar to males of several groups of mammals—is *baculum*, plural *bacula*. It has several other names, some polite, others not so much. The word has the same root as *Bacillus* (a genus of bacterium) and *Baculites* (a genus of extinct marine “shellfish”), which have rod-like shapes. Enclosed within the male genitalia of *most* species of Primates, and of all Rodents, Insectivores, Carnivores and Chiroptera (bats), it “lends firm support to a hard job.”³ Given the dimensions of walrus bacula, one could not mistake them, but even in smaller mammals the baculum is distinctive and can be used to identify the original owner to species. Among those mammals that have a baculum, that of the walrus is easily the largest.



Dr. Jim Burns is a vertebrate paleontologist and Curator Emeritus at the Royal Alberta Museum, Edmonton. He has copy-edited some 18 books, one of which won a prestigious national award. Now living in Winnipeg, Jim is applying his energies to exploring this city’s history. He currently serves on Manitoba History’s editorial team.

How is this relevant? In September 1961, 67 WPC members flew to England to participate in the London Press Club’s 79th anniversary celebrations, during which they presented the LPC with a walrus “trophy.”⁴ In the best tradition of press clubs, there had been a lengthy, cordial and reciprocal relationship between the two clubs for decades, for London’s club is only five years older than the Winnipeg club! Twenty-one years later, Eric Wells provided briefing notes⁵ to Don Aylard, who would lead a WPC delegation to the London club’s 100th anniversary, in 1982. The gift from Winnipeg to London, Wells suggested, was a “salute to the London Club in the traditional manner of the HBC.” This is reminiscent of the tribute rendered unto Caesar from the far corners of his empire. Aylard’s speech thus recalled the 1961 meeting and, of course, the baculum trophy presentation.

In this regard, Wells noted another special gift-giving tradition with connections to Winnipeg and the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC). It seems the HBC accumulated walrus bacula from the northern sea coasts (probably a “guy thing” then, too), and the men in charge of the forts—the “factors”—stored the bones away for special occasions. Wells declared that in the HBC’s operational headquarters in Winnipeg lay a supply of walrus bacula “stacked up like cordwood.” A truly stunning image! “In distant days,” he wrote in 1982, “it was the custom of the HBC to present retiring officers of far northern posts with a walrus penis [bone].” (*Editor’s note:* Almost certainly a gold watch would have served the retiree better than a bone the size and heft of a small baseball bat, but the HBC brass were rarely that generous.) Moreover, the recipient of such a prize “could judge the appreciation of his life’s work in the North by the length of the penis he received upon leaving office.” Longer was better, implying deeper satisfaction with his service.

More recently, intriguing support for Wells’ story was provided in a retrospective “blog” posted on the Internet in 2006 by a man known only as “Ol’ Sam.”⁶ The posting harkened back to Sam’s experience around 1962 when he worked in the Arctic. His employers had included a regional airline, an ice-roads trucking firm, and the Yellowknife Fire Department. Accompanying the blog photo he shot from an HBC Beaver aircraft over an Arctic community (perhaps Igloodik, he thought), he wrote:

... we stopped for a few days to take inventory ... I was given the task of going to “that” shed and counting the contents there-in. The contents were almost exclusively Walrus penis bones, hundreds of them! I’d never heard of such a thing, what on earth does the Bay buy them for. “Ah” I was told, “the English make walking sticks out of them.”



University of Winnipeg, Western Canada Pictorial Index, 39636.

Winnipeg Press “Club”. *Winnipeg Tribune* photographer Hugh Allan (1917–2004, left) and former *Free Press* reporter turned Conservative politician Sterling Lyon (1927–2010, right) show off the Press Club’s prized walrus baculum in 1961. A similar trophy was presented by the Winnipeg Press Club the same year to the London Press Club in England.

Was this the basis for Wells’ *BACULAUREATE* thesis on warehoused walrus pizzles? Lore and history come neck-and-neck here, but Sam’s blog account lends verisimilitude to Wells’ claim.

That Ol’ Sam was told they used the bones to make walking sticks—surely the seed of future folklore if not nipped at the tip—has a kind of parallel. WPC Past-President Ian Sutherland (1973) discovered in HBC records that the captain of the first ship to dodge the spring ice floes on Lake Superior and tie up at HBC’s Fort William docks used to be awarded a fine walking-cane. Speaking of walrus “walking sticks,” is there a theme here? There’s more. In 1931, the Dalgliesh Steam Shipping Company, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, loaded the first grain ever shipped out of the port of Churchill, Manitoba bound for the UK;⁷ townsfolk offered a gift—so it is said—to the first skipper to arrive in the Bay that year, and to subsequent first-arrivals for some years after. Going with the floes in a moment of *pure imagining*, Sutherland—raconteur, humourist and latter-day historian—proposed that the captain of the first ship arriving in Hudson Bay each spring *ought* to have been rewarded with a walrus baculum trophy.⁸ This is how lore is born.

The staff-of-office that represents the power and authority of the WPC—a moderate 19 inches long—is mounted on an oak plaque. The engraved brass plaque affixed to it conveys those four immortal words of Lewis Carroll’s, “The time has come . . .” They conjure up several things: the image of a magnificent animal with a face only a mother could love; a wonderful poem by the creator of the well-known *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*; and a poor pun.

It is uncertain, even now, how the WPC came by its prize. Perhaps it was culled from an HBC “cordwood”

pile at the same time the London specimen was selected (circa 1961). The LPC presentation was contemporary with a 1961 photo featuring *Tribune* reporter, MLA, and future Manitoba Premier, Sterling Lyon, next to news photographer and former Club president Hughie Allan (1958), the two proudly holding the beribboned specimen that is still held by the Winnipeg Press Club.

The item has served to excite and titillate many who have gathered in the rooms of the Press Club over the decades. In 1975, one such visitor—New York madame, Xaviera Hollander—handled the “situation” with élan. Others, maybe not so much.

“As one old walrus put it: ‘Speak softly and carry a big stick.’”⁹ 🐨

Notes

1. With all due respect to Lewis Carroll, this is a word play on the poem “The Walrus and the Carpenter” as recited by Tweedledee to Tweedledum and Alice, from Carroll’s book *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871), the sequel to *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865).
2. Anna Shumilak (Research Assistant, HBC Archives, Winnipeg) searched the Company’s Archives exhaustively in August 2012. I thank her for her sterling, but unrewarding, efforts.
3. John J. Burns, 1975, “The Baculum”, page 27 in *BioGraffiti: A Natural Selection*. W. W. Norton & Co., New York.
4. *Winnipeg Press Club 1962 Yearbook / Beer & Skits Program*, page 36.
5. Eric Wells, [1982], unpublished briefing notes, on file at the Winnipeg Press Club.
6. <http://icemannwt.wordpress.com/2006/09/27/taloyoak-spence-bay-nu/> — This is not verification without fact-checking; unfortunately, there appears to be no means to contact “Sam” to validate the story.
7. Andrew Taylor, 1993, “Churchill Chapter”, *Manitoba History* No. 25. Accessed at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/25/churchill1931.shtml
8. Ian Sutherland, personal communication, August 2012. Ian has been very helpful in this research.
9. Burns, *op. cit.* This quotation no doubt refers to US President Teddy Roosevelt. Some folks fancy his countenance had an uncanny resemblance to a walrus.

Thanks . . .

The Editors thank the following people who assisted in the preparation of this issue of *Manitoba History*: Jason Arthur (JibbaJabba Fonts), the Don Comstock family, Christopher Dafoe, Leesa Dahl (*Winnipeg Free Press*), Phyllis Fraser (Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba), Brett Lougheed (University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections), Margaret McMillan (*Winnipeg Free Press*), Murray Peterson (City of Winnipeg), and Gabrielle Prefontaine (University of Winnipeg Archives).

Churchill, the Queen and the Press Club

by Sheilla Jones

After 125 years, the Winnipeg Press Club has collected its share of tales, some of them tall ones, but some, like the story of Winston Churchill and Queen Victoria, might actually be true.

The Winnipeg Press Club regularly held dinners with guest speakers in downtown restaurants, and had done so right from the club's very first year in 1887, particularly if there was a notable political or journalism figure in town. Winston Spencer Churchill certainly fit the bill, not for this political career but for his adventures as a war correspondent for the London *Morning Post*. Churchill was in Winnipeg to give a talk on Monday, 21 January 1901.

The next morning, at Government House in Winnipeg, Churchill was awaiting news, along with the rest of the British Empire, of the imminent death of Queen Victoria. The 27-year-old had been elected a Member of Parliament in England on 1 October 1900 and was scheduled to take his seat in February on his return to London. He had received a cable from London only days earlier advising him that the death of the monarch would not, much to his relief, trigger a new election.¹ Churchill simply couldn't afford to spend his limited funds refighting the last election. He needed money, and that was why he was in Winnipeg.

Dispatches from Osborne House on the Isle of Wight where the Queen was on her deathbed were front-page news on Tuesday morning. The Tuesday morning newspapers reported the Queen's imminent demise.

"The Queen's strength still continues to diminish," read the headline, in full caps, in the Tuesday edition of *The Morning Telegram*.² "The Queen kept alive by stimulants, and may live until Thursday," the *Manitoba Free Press* announced on the front page of its morning paper.³

In the same newspapers that carried the news of the Queen's impending death, Churchill was also reading the reviews of his sold-out talk the previous night at the Winnipeg Theatre on the corner of Adelaide and Notre Dame.

"Mr. Spencer Churchill: A stirring lecture from Lord Randolph's son on the war in South Africa", ran the headline

on the page 5 review in *The Morning Telegram*;⁴ "Winston Churchill on the War: A record-breaking audience hears the talented correspondent relate his exploits" headed the *Manitoba Free Press* page 6 story.⁵

Churchill had been touring since the previous summer, giving a lecture called, "The War as I Saw It." It was an action-adventure story about his capture and escape in South Africa, where he was covering the Boer War for the London *Morning Post*. He was an international celebrity.

As the story goes, on 15 November 1899, Churchill was aboard a troop train when it was attacked by Boer artillery. The train derailed and blocked the British retreat.

Chaos ensued, and troops began to panic. With the consent of the commanding officer ... Churchill stepped in. Amid flying bullets Churchill had the train's engineer clear the tracks by ramming the derailed cars out of the way, directed the transfer of injured troops to the engine's tender, and rode back with them to the nearest station. Churchill then headed back to the ambush scene on foot to assist those still pinned down by Boer fire.⁶

However, Churchill was captured and taken to a makeshift prison in Pretoria. He demanded to be released, protesting that he was just a reporter. He managed to escape about a month later, heading for a train for Portuguese East Africa where he would be safe. That was also part of the adventure.

After a nine-day ordeal of surreptitious travel under harsh conditions on foot and on trains, after keeping a vulture at bay, hiding in a rat-infested mine shaft, among dirty coal sacks, and in a shipment of wool, Churchill finally made it to neutral territory. On December 23 he entered British-controlled Durban, where he was given a hero's welcome.⁷

Churchill's celebrity status led to two offers, one of which was to run for a seat in Parliament, the other a tour in the United States to share his war experience.⁸ He did run for Parliament and won his seat, and he accepted the offer of a North American tour. The tour was arranged by Maj.



W. S. Churchill, *Frontiers and Wars*, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode.

A young Winston Churchill as a Boer War correspondent for London's *Morning Post*. He had lots of stories to share with Winnipeg's news fraternity when he spoke on 21 January 1901.

James Pond who was also an agent for Arthur Conan Doyle and Mark Twain, and for the most part, it was a success. On his stop in Toronto, Pond and Churchill had a falling out, with Churchill threatening to pack up and go home. The tiff was resolved, but Churchill was further aggrieved by hecklers at some of his lectures in the US, as Americans were not always on the British side in the Boer War.

The enthusiastic audience that greeted Churchill in Winnipeg on Monday night, his only stop in western Canada, and his comfortable accommodation at Government House suited Churchill much better. Still, Churchill had advised the organizers beforehand that if the Queen should die before his talk, he would be obliged to cancel his talk out of respect for the monarch.⁹ The queen lived on, and the sold-out event was a great success, given his financial concerns. The *Free Press* later reported:

Over 500 came, bringing out the STO—standing tickets only. Before the curtain went up the young lecturer put his eye to the peephole and asked reporters in the wings to estimate the worth of the house. This was the son of Lord Randolph Churchill, seventh Duke of Marlborough. Surely, he was above money.¹⁰

Churchill was not, of course, above money. However, Queen Victoria did not survive the day on Tuesday, and the awaited official bulletins arrived at the Winnipeg newspaper offices shortly after 12:30 PM, announcing that the Queen had died at Osborne House at 6.30 PM, London time.¹¹ The newspapers were ready for the announcement, and prepared to put out an extra of the Tuesday edition with a new front page, announcing the Queen's death. Flags in Winnipeg were promptly being lowered to half mast. But where was Churchill?

This part of the story, up until the noon hour on 22 January 1901, is true and well documented. What happened *after* is part of the Winnipeg Press Club lore, and could very easily be true. Or not.

According to writer Christopher Dafoe, “Winston Churchill is said to have been speaking to a Press Club dinner in 1901 when news of the death of Queen Victoria arrived. As it was known the queen was on her deathbed, Churchill had warned the club that in the event of her death he would have to cancel his speech. This, he explained, would be protocol for a member of parliament.”¹²

Dafoe said this story had been told to him by his uncle Ted,¹³ son of John W. Dafoe, both of whom were long-time editors at the *Free Press*. John Dafoe was still in Montreal when he was offered the job as *Free Press* editor in early January 1901,¹⁴ having left Winnipeg in 1892, and he didn't move back to the city until later in 1901. Dafoe wasn't in town for the Churchill event, but his colleague Walter Payne, the long-time managing editor of the *Free Press*¹⁵ and the president of the Winnipeg Press Club in 1901, certainly was.¹⁶

According to the story told by Christopher Dafoe, Payne was at the Press Club event where Churchill was speaking to the assembled newsmen—who would likely have been quite interested in the adventures of a war correspondent—when Payne was handed the cable, addressed to Churchill, informing him of the royal demise. If this were the case, the Press Club event would have to have been at lunch time rather than dinner time, because flags flew at half-mast and the shop keepers on Portage Avenue were already hanging up black draperies and placing pictures of Queen Victoria in their shop windows by early afternoon.

The cable, according to Ted Dafoe, “remained in Payne's pocket until the speech was over. Churchill, he later recalled, chuckled when he spotted the time lag in the delivery of the message, and said he would have done the same thing had he been the dinner chairman facing the loss of a distinguished speaker.”¹⁷

Churchill, as he so often did, wrote to his mother that Tuesday. “So the Queen is dead. The news reached us at Winnipeg and this city far away among the snows—fourteen hundred miles from any British town of importance—began to hang its head and hoist half-mast flags.”¹⁸

He made no mention of a lunch or dinner with the Press Club in that letter, but that does not mean it did not happen. It is entirely plausible that it did, but there does not appear to be any historical record available that would verify it. The lore about Churchill, the Queen and the Press Club might well be true. ❧

Notes

1. *St. Paul Press*, 23 January 1901, page 2.
2. *The Morning Telegram*, hereafter *MT*, 22 January 1901, page 1.
3. *Manitoba Free Press*, hereafter *MFP*, 22 January 1901, page 1.
4. *MT*, 22 January 1901, page 5.
5. *MFP*, 22 January 1901, page 6.
6. Randolph S. Churchill, 1966, *Winston S. Churchill: Youth 1874–1900*, vol. 1, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, page 448.
7. Celia Sandys, 1999, *Churchill: Wanted Dead or Alive*, Carroll & Graf Publishers, New York, pages 93–98.
8. Todd Ronnei, “Churchill in Minnesota,” *Minnesota History*, Fall 2001, page 348.
9. *MFP*, 22 January 1901, page 6.
10. *Winnipeg Free Press*, 23 January 1901, page 1.
11. *MT Extra*, 22 January 1901, page 1.
12. Christopher Dafoe, “The Press Club: Beer and Uplift”, *Torch on the Prairies*, The Nor'Westers, Winnipeg, 1988, page 3.
13. Personal communication, 15 April 2012.
14. David John Hall, *Clifford Sifton: A Lonely Eminence, 1901–1929, Volume 2*, UBC Press, Vancouver, page 21.
15. *MFP*, 9 November 1922, page 34.
16. *MFP*, 5 November 1900, page 6.
17. Dafoe, 1988, *op. cit.*, page 3.
18. Churchill, Winston to Lady Randolph Churchill, 22 January 1901, quoted by Todd Ronnei, *op. cit.*, page 353.

Founding The Nor'Wester

by William Coldwell and introduced by Scott Stephen

The arrival of Manitoba's first newspaper and printing press in 1859 was already part of the province's history when William Coldwell's speech about it was presented at an 1888 reunion of the city's newsmen, hosted by the Winnipeg Press Club.

The 1850s were an eventful decade for the Red River Settlement, bringing significant developments which opened that colony to the world on a new and larger scale. None was more significant than the arrival of two men and a printing press in November 1859. William Buckingham and William Coldwell had made the arduous journey from Toronto, anxious to get in on the ground floor of what they confidently expected was an imminent boom time on the banks of the Red. Nearly thirty years later, with that much-anticipated boom finally underway, Coldwell took an opportunity to reflect on the somewhat rocky beginnings of the age of journalism on the prairies. Ill health prevented him from attending the Winnipeg Press Club's second annual dinner, but his paper was read on his behalf by George Ham. That paper, read on 31 March 1888 and amply illustrating the Press Club's ongoing fascination with the history which its members have witnessed and recorded, is presented here in its entirety for the first time in public.¹

William Coldwell (1834–1907) was born in London, educated in Dublin, and came to Canada at the age of twenty. He worked as a correspondent for the *Toronto Leader* for five years before making his journey farther west.² His partner, William Buckingham (1832–1915), was from Devonshire in England, and got involved with journalism as a shorthand writer for the *North of England Press*. He came to Canada in 1857 and put his shorthand skills to work as a parliamentary reporter for *The Globe*.³ Although their employers stood on opposite sides of the Canadian political fence, both were intrigued by the possibilities offered by the prairie region.

That region had been very much in the news in recent years. In August 1856, *The Globe* began calling for Canada to annex the territories west of the Great Lakes—in the interests of land-hungry Upper Canadian farmers and of Toronto businessmen, both seeking new frontiers for themselves. A public inquiry into the Hudson's Bay Company and its territories the following year, and the subsequent launch of two major scientific expeditions to the prairies, helped solidify the West's place in the mainstream of Canadian political and economic thinking.

Encouraged by the *Globe's* owner and editor, George Brown, Buckingham and Coldwell travelled overland to Red River via St. Paul in the late summer of 1859. *The Globe* had just published a story about a young newspaperman of similar ambition but less detailed geographical knowledge.

He had gotten as far as Sault Ste. Marie before he discovered that there would be no feasible way of getting his heavy printing press from Fort William to Upper Fort Garry.⁴ The two Williams were wiser, travelling light (with only a hand press) as far as St. Paul, where they purchased the bulk of their machinery and all of their paper and type. The journey to Upper Fort Garry took a little over a month, and they arrived in what would soon become Winnipeg literally as the first snow began to fall. Establishing themselves in a small building at the corner of Main and Water streets, they were able to publish their first issue on 28 December 1859.⁵

As Coldwell mentions in his reminiscence below, the settlement's first newspaper was not the only major local development of 1859. In June, the steamboat *Anson Northrup* had arrived from Lafayette, Minnesota, ushering in a new era in the history of transportation in the region. The steamboat and the newspaper, though unrelated ventures, were both momentous as significant improvements in communication between Red River and the "outside world". In particular, the quantity and quality of information about Red River which was circulating in Canada and the United States increased substantially as a result of these ventures. They were less important as Red River's windows on the world, than as the world's windows on Red River. The fact that both the steamboat and the newspaper were initiatives based in Minnesota and Canada, respectively, illustrates how eager many "outsiders" were to gain such a window. As *The Globe* observed, "Toronto has a race to run with St. Paul [Minnesota] to secure the full benefit of the Red River trade and the *Nor'Wester* affords the best medium for introducing themselves to those they would have as customers."⁶



William Coldwell established several newspapers in Manitoba, including The Nor'Wester (1859), The Red River Pioneer (1869) and The Manitoban (1871). The latter ultimately merged into the Manitoba Free Press. Coldwell's career in journalism ended as a parliamentary reporter for the Free Press. He was also a founding member of the Manitoba Historical Society.



Scott Stephen has spent twenty-five years working in museums, archives, and universities. For the last five years, he has provided support in Parks Canada's Winnipeg office to national historic sites from York Factory to the Yellowhead Pass. He lives in Winnipeg with his wife, son, cat, and an alarming number of books.

The "Prospectus of 'The Nor'Wester,' a journal to be published at Fort Garry, Red River Territory," promised that the new publication would be "devoted to the varied and rapidly growing interests of that region."

Exploring parties organized under the direction ... of the Canadian and British Governments, have established the immediate availability for the purposes of Colonization of the vast country watered by the Red River, the Assiniboine, and the Saskatchewan; and private parties of American citizens ... are engaged in determining the practicability of rendering this the great overland route to the gold deposits of British Columbia. The Red River Settlement is the home of a considerable population, hardy, industrious, and thrifty; occupying a fine farming country; with all the advantages of prairie and timber combined. It has churches many; and educational advantages which will endure comparison with those of more pretentious communities. And for hundreds of miles beyond, stretches one of the most magnificent agricultural regions in the world, watered abundantly with Lakes and navigable Rivers, with a sufficiency of timber, with vast prairies of unsurpassed fertility, with mineral resources, in some parts, of no common value, and with a climate as salubrious as it is delightful. [sic] Such a country cannot now remain unpeopled. It offers temptations to the emigrant nowhere excelled. It invites alike the mechanic and the farmer. Its rivers and rolling prairies and accessible mountain passes, secure to it the advantages which must belong to a highway to the Pacific. It has mail communication with Canada, *via* Fort William; and regular communication with the Mississippi, *via* steamboat and stage to St. Paul. What can impede its development? What can prevent the settlement around Fort Garry from becoming the political and commercial centre of a great and prosperous people?⁷

Buckingham and Coldwell promised to "hasten the change, not only by stimulating the industrial life of the Red River Settlement, but by assisting the work of governmental organization, the necessity for which is admitted on all sides; not only by cultivating a healthy public sentiment upon the spot, but by conveying to more distant observers an accurate knowledge of the position, progress, and prospect of affairs." Here were two bold statements. One concerned the optimistic and imperialist vision of the West which was becoming ascendant in the council chambers of British North America: agricultural, commercial, and prosperous. The other concerned the power of the press to cultivate and direct social, political, and economic change.

Buckingham and Coldwell described their new publication as "a vehicle of news and for the pertinent

discussion of local questions; governed only by a desire to promote local interests, and a determination to keep aloof from every entangling alliance which might mar its usefulness at home or abroad. It will be a faithful chronicler of events—a reporter, assiduous and impartial."⁸ As the centre for justice and administration across a wide area, and the seat of two bishoprics and several educational institutions, a paper of record was surely needed in Red River. They assured future readers that the new publication would operate on "an independent commercial basis. Indebted to no special interests for its origin, and looking to none for its maintenance, it will rely wholly upon the honest and efficient exercise of its functions as the reflex [?] of the wants and opinions, the rights and interests, of the Red River Settlement." This was somewhat disingenuous, considering their clearly expressed vision of the region's future and their initial connection with Brown and other expansionists in Canada. However, the two young editors were newspapermen by training and inclination, and their journalism was of a higher quality than that of their more ideologically motivated successors.

Buckingham returned east in 1861 to become the editor of the *Reformer* in Simcoe. He went on to enjoy a varied career in journalism, politics, and business. His departure left the *Nor'Wester* in the hands of Coldwell and James Ross, who had joined the partnership early in 1860.⁹ Ross also became Coldwell's brother-in-law, after William married James' sister Jemima. At the same time as Ross became a partner in the newspaper, Coldwell and Buckingham became partners in Ross' dry goods and hardware store in Colony Gardens (between Bannatyne and Alexander avenues). It was common in those days for newspapermen to engage in other business activities too, and the newspaper had also served as a book-selling business from its inception. Ross' store gave the two Williams another supplementary income and a place from which to keep their fingers on the pulse of the community. They certainly had their hands full, as Coldwell recalls below: "Having everything connected with the business to do, and no one to help us to do it, we had to become our own editors, reporters, compositors, pressmen, newsboys and general delivery agents, besides having to undertake a house-to-house canvass throughout the entire settlement." When they advertised for an apprentice in January 1860, they could in all honesty promise that the lucky young man (W. F. Garrioch of Portage la Prairie, as it turned out) would "learn the Printing Business in all its branches."¹⁰

After Buckingham's departure, Coldwell and Ross ran the newspaper until December 1863, when Ross dropped out. Ross' involvement in the *Nor'Wester* had cost him dearly, for an editorial dispute with the governing Council of Assiniboia in 1862 had resulted in his dismissal from his public posts—as postmaster, sheriff, and governor of the gaol.¹¹ Dr. John Schultz came in as a partner a few months later, and succeeded to the whole ownership of the paper in 1865, when Coldwell returned east with his family. Under Schultz, the editorial policy became more partisan

than it had been before, and *The Nor'Wester* became a more outspoken opponent of the Hudson's Bay Company and proponent of annexation by Canada.¹²

Coldwell returned to Red River on the very eve of that annexation so long advocated by Schultz and (less rabidly) himself. Although Louis Riel's Provisional Government suppressed the publication of Coldwell's new venture, the pro-Canadian *Pioneer*, Coldwell was too valuable a man to leave out in the cold. He served as clerk to the Provisional Assembly during Riel's tenure. In 1871, he partnered with Robert Cunningham to found the *Manitoban*, and they soon become the first Queen's Printers in Manitoba.¹³

Coldwell remained a fixture in early Winnipeg after his return. Having been a widower since 1867, in 1875 or 1876 he married Jemima Mackenzie Ross, widow of Coldwell's brother-in-law William Ross.¹⁴ For nearly thirty years they lived at Brook Bank, or Ross House, now preserved and maintained as a museum by the Manitoba Historical Society—of which Coldwell was a founding member in 1879. His interest in Manitoba's history was rooted in his personal involvement with that history. As his reminiscences here clearly illustrate, he had been both a participant in and a faithful recorder of some transformative developments on the prairies.



The Story of the Beginning by William Coldwell

November 1, 1859, the first newspaper outfit for Northwest British America arrived on the Assiniboine, at the crossing opposite Upper Fort Garry. The *Nor'Wester*, with W. Buckingham and W. Coldwell as its proprietors. Up to that date no newspaper was printed anywhere throughout the vast region stretching from the north shore of Lake Superior to the Rocky Mountains, and from the United States boundary lines as far north as any one of our craft would care to stretch. In one little corner of the territory, the Red river settlement, there were 10,000 people; and we resolved (in Salvation Army phrase) to "open fire".

The paper and much of the plant had been purchased in St. Paul, in order to save freight between Toronto (our starting point) and the capital of Minnesota; and on the 28th of September we made a start from the latter city with ox teams—a very wild start indeed, as one team ran away at the outset, and distributed some of the type in the streets. But by the time we reached our journey's end there were no more attempts at running away.

I shall not stop to notice our snail-like progress by the Crow Wing Trail, how we struggled through the swamps, worried around and across fallen trees and stumps, toiled up and raced down the sides of the Leaf Mountains, forded rivers with steep banks and boulder-strewn beds, or puzzled out our way via crooked sand bars, over which we went zigzagging with occasional excursions into the depths along side. Red Lake River, the widest, deepest, crookedest



City of Winnipeg Planning, Property and Development Department

Commemorating *The Nor'Wester*. In 1958, the Historic Sites Advisory Board of Manitoba unveiled a plaque near the site of *The Nor'Wester* office. Located on the west exterior side of the Federal Building at 269 Main Street, it reads: "Near this spot stood the original office of *The Nor'Wester*, the first newspaper on the Canadian prairies. Founded in the Red River Settlement by William Buckingham and William Coldwell, the first issue appeared on December 28, 1859 and publication continued until it was seized by Louis Riel in 1869. It was a constant advocate of the entry of the West into Confederation."

and swiftest in current—took some of us up to our necks, and very nearly took me out of this vale of tears.¹⁵

One of our respected fellow citizens, Capt. Donaldson,¹⁶ a famous traveller in those early days, witnessed the crossing of the caravan at that point; and he has a story he tells with infinite relish, as to one of the forders, who was invisible all but a head and a "stovepipe" hat. The Capt. not expecting to see such a hat there and then, and completely taken aback by the vision, laughed his heartiest as he does to this day when he recalls the scene.

On an average we did not exceed between 15 and 20 miles a day in our march through the wilderness to this promised land. Slow going, sleepy travel it was, compared with the rapid transit now the order of the day. This fast age had already left the old land marks far behind. The journey from St. Paul to this point, which took over a month when we first came, has for several years back been performed, in less than 24 hours. On our way here, 29 years ago, we found the Northwestern Railway limits to be at Lacrosse, on the Mississippi.¹⁷ Beyond that town the traveller in this direction had a choice of staging or steam-boating. Staging could be obtained to Fort Abercrombit [sic] in Minnesota.¹⁸ Steamboating virtually ended at St. Paul, although some little business was done by steamboatmen beyond that city.

The year 1859 witnessed a great change. The lucrative trade between the Red River settlement and St. Paul had long been carried out, which made the residents of the Apostolic City desirous of still further extending trade relations with this region. These desires took shape the previous year when there was much discussion on the point. Hon. J. W. Taylor, (the esteemed U.S. consul here) then a citizen of St. Paul, had taken a deep interest in the study of the immense resources of the Northwest, and

had been frequently their able and eloquent exponent. He warmly advocated the scheme resolved on, that of opening up steam communication with Fort Garry by placing a steamboat on the Red River, which it was hoped would prove navigable from Fort Abercrombie, or thereabouts, to Fort Garry. Next year the Anson Northup dissipated all doubts as to the navigability of the river by steaming to Fort Garry. The experiment was a grand success.¹⁹

The first of the steamboats and the first of the newspapers came along here the same year, the steamboat men being ahead. And they continue somewhat ahead of us, I observe, for they have moved northward, and were last year, if I do not mistake, plying on the far-off waters of the Athabasca and the Mackenzie.

We commenced publication on the 28th Dec., and at the outset were greater monopolists than we had any wish to be. Having everything connected with the business to do, and no one to help us to do it, we had to become our own editors, reporters, compositors, pressmen, newsboys and general delivery agents, besides having to undertake a house-to-house canvass throughout the entire settlement. Does any one suppose that we had not enough to do?

We secured a liberal subscription for our fortnightly payments in advance. Of course the inevitable crank had to be encountered even in this remote part of the world, and accordingly in our canvass we met persons who assured us that they did not want the *Nor'Wester* because they knew more local news than we did while, as to the foreign news, they could learn as much as they desired from other papers which they got hold of at long intervals. They were also afraid that if they supported one journal in their midst, soon there would be two, four; or a score knocking at the door, with a wide diversity of views, to the great bewilderment and detriment of an innocent and confiding public! Each of these cranks left us minus twelve shillings sterling and yet we were incorrigible.

The business thus commenced continued until the winter of 1864, when the office and its contents were burned. Up to that date I had as partners, for various periods, Mr. W. Buckingham, Mr. James Ross and Doctor (now Senator) Schultz.

The last named resolved to resuscitate the paper, and I determined to return to Toronto, but before doing so I helped to get out the new issue. The Bishop of Rupert's Land allowed us to use one of the old buildings belonging to St. John's college as a printing office. We got together a little type and paper which had been brought out for mission purposes and from Mr. Alonzo Barnard (a Minnesotian versed in printing, preaching and photography)²⁰ we secured a hand press of the most ancient, ponderous and amazing build, possessing, withal, warped and resisting qualities—perhaps we ought to say eccentricities—which insured to the unfortunate pressman the hardest “pull” and the worst impression ever given by a hand-press in this or any other land, I suppose.

Under these auspices, and with the assistance given by Mr. W. R. Ross and Mr. A. Sutherland (both of whom

learned the printing business here), *The Nor'Wester* was revived, in reduced size, for a season. I left it in the hands of Dr. Schultz, from whom it passed to Doctor W. Bown.²¹

Five years subsequently, returning with material for a new venture, I fell into the rebellion. Lieut. Governor McDougall was fenced-out at Scratching River. A journal-that-might-have-been was fenced out too, by an order from Riel, forbidding its appearance “until peace was restored”. This one never appeared except as a sort of half-and-half arrangement—two pages of which (*The Pioneer*) favored the McDougall regime, while the remaining two pages (*The New Nation*) advocated rebellion, annexation and the Riel regime.

Now, stop a little. You must not run away with the notion that I was essaying an act of equestrianism, and riding two horses—not a bit of it. The position was this: an early disallowance act barred my way. I was not allowed to print anything. Instead of compositors, Metis guards held possession of the office. Fiddles, pipes and pemmican were interspersed with pistols, guns and ammunition and this mixture further complicated with a new paper outfit in a very limited space, formed a combination sufficient to drive any printer to the verge of insanity. The press was a fiddle-rack, the cases dotted all over with pipes and tobacco.

I made haste to get rid of that establishment, and joyfully found a purchaser in Major H. M. Robinson.²² He published *The New Nation*, and in the first number the two pages of *The Pioneer*, already in type, were used. Hence the mixture.

The career of *The New Nation* ended soon after Sir Garnet Wolseley marched in and Riel marched out.

Mr. Thomas Spence edited *The New Nation* in its declining years, when the fires of rebellion and annexation were burnt out.²³

The Manitoban, a weekly journal, published by Messrs. Coldwell and Cunningham, next took up the running, in 1870, and held its course until 1872, when it was wrecked by a mob who (intending to be quite impartial, perhaps) wrecked the offices of *The Nor'Wester*, (owned by Dr. Brown [sic] and *Le Metis*, (Mr. Royal's paper).²⁴ *The Manitoban* and *Metis* came to life again, the former running till 1874, when it was incorporated with *The Standard*, with Mr. Molyneux St. John as chief.²⁵

The News Letter, an excellent paper, with Mr. P. G. Laurie, now of Battleford as proprietor, was also published here from 1870 for, I do not remember, what period.²⁶

In this sketch I did not intend going further than 1870, which would bring me to the verge of the new era, when we become a province and had volunteers, and a Fenian Raid of our own, and House Guards; when the old governor and council of Assiniboia finally disappeared from the scene; when the new lieutenant governor, “Our trusty and well-beloved, the Hon. Adams George Archibald”—and a legislature with two chambers appeared; when we first indulged in the luxury of a public debt when decimal currency replaced “Hudson's Bay blanks”, (as the company's notes were termed) when lawyers and doctors

in flocks flew to the rescue—with the usual results;—and when “emigration waves” began to flow and ebb.

At all this I only took a peep. After me came the deluge—of newspapers, and all things became new. ❧

Notes

The full text of William Coldwell’s description of the Red River Settlement’s first newspaper, as presented at the Winnipeg Press Club’s reunion dinner in 1888, was reproduced in its entirety in the 1955 WPC Yearbook / Beer & Skits program.

1. Excerpts appeared in the *Free Press*’ report on the dinner (2 April 1888) and in Aileen Garland, “The Nor’Wester and the Men Who Established It”, *Manitoba Historical Society Transactions*, series 3 (1959/60 season), available online at www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/3/norwester.shtml. George H. Ham (1847–1926) had begun his Winnipeg newspaper career as a reporter for the *Manitoba Free Press* in 1875. He soon started his own paper, the *Daily Tribune* (distinct from the *Winnipeg Tribune* of later years), which in 1880 merged with the *Times*. For his biography, see www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/ham_gh.shtml. Some copies of these newspapers from 1879 and 1880 can be found in the collections of the Manitoba Legislative Library.
2. For more biographical information, see www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/coldwell_w.shtml
3. For more biographical information, see www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/buckingham_w.shtml
4. *The Globe* (Toronto), 26 August 1859, cited in Garland.
5. In 1958, the Historic Sites Advisory Board of Manitoba unveiled a plaque at 269 Main Street, commemorating *The Nor’Wester* and its original office building: see www.gov.mb.ca/chc/hrb/plaques/plaq0856.html and www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/sites/norwester.shtml
6. *The Globe*, 26 August 1859, quoted in Garland.
7. “Prospectus of ‘The Nor’Wester,’ a journal to be published at Fort Garry, Red River Territory”, 22 August 1859; reprinted in *The Nor’Wester*, 28 December 1859. This prospectus and subsequent issues of *The Nor’Wester* are available online at <http://manitobia.ca/content/en/newspapers/Nor%27Wester%20%281859%29>
8. “Prospectus,” *The Nor’Wester*, 28 December 1859, <http://manitobia.ca/content/en/newspapers/NWR/1859/12/28/1/Ar00102.html/Olive>
9. For a brief biography of James Ross (1835–1871), see www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/ross_j.shtml
10. “Apprentice Wanted”, *The Nor’Wester* 14 January 1860, p. 1, <http://manitobia.ca/content/en/newspapers/NWR/1860/01/14/1/Ar00111.html/Olive> For Garrioch’s apprenticeship, see A. C. Garrioch, *First Furrows* (Winnipeg, 1923), p. 143.
11. In response to the Dakota War just across the international border, a nervous Council of Assiniboa petitioned the British government for a garrison of regular troops to be posted to Red River. Ross began circulating his own petition, calling for Crown Colony status to replace the HBC-dominated Council of Assiniboa. Matters came to a head when Ross refused to print the Council’s petition (which got nearly 1,800 signatures, although *The Nor’Wester* questioned the validity of some of those names) in *The Nor’Wester*, whereupon the Council dismissed Ross from his offices and the HBC withdrew its lukewarm support of the newspaper: see J. M. Bumsted, *Trials and Tribulations: The Red River Settlement and the Emergence of Manitoba 1811–1870* (Winnipeg: Great Plains, 2003), p. 160; “The Company’s Hostility to the Press”, *The Nor’Wester* 24 January 1863, page 3, <http://manitobia.ca/content/en/newspapers/NWR/1863/01/24/3/Ar00300.pdf/Olive>
12. There has been some debate—from the 1860s onward—about the influence of *The Nor’Wester* on Red River politics. That discussion is too large to elaborate on here, beyond quoting the opinion of Rev. A. C. Garrioch: admitting that he had “many reasons to feel very kindly towards that old corporation,” the HBC, he had “no hesitation in saying that the paper, while under the control of its first proprietors, and later of Mr. James Ross, was considered by unprejudiced readers

as very fair in the stand it took in all public questions.” Garrioch, pp. 142–143. For a brief biography of John Christian Schultz (1840–1896), see www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/schultz_jc.shtml

13. For a brief biography of Robert Cunningham (1836–1874), see www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/cunningham_r.shtml
14. For a brief biography of William Ross (1825–1856), see www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/ross_w2.shtml
15. For details of their journey, see “From St. Paul to Red River”, *The Nor’Wester*, 14 January 1860, <http://manitobia.ca/content/en/newspapers/NWR/1860/01/14/2/Ar00200.html/Olive>; and “*The Nor’Wester Comes to Red River*”, *Manitoba History* 57 (February 2008), pp. 40–42. For more on the Crow Wing (or Woods) Trail, see Rhoda R. Gilman, Carolyn Gilman, & Deborah M. Stultz, *The Red River Trails 1820–1870: Oxcart Routes between St. Paul and the Selkirk Settlement* (St Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1979), pp. 56–68.
16. Hugh S. Donaldson (1829–1904) did not in fact receive the rank of captain until 1862 or 1863: see www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/donaldson_hs.shtml
17. Coldwell is referring to the Chicago & Milwaukee Railway, which (after a few mergers) later became the Chicago & North Western Railway.
18. The Minnesota Stage Company had just opened a stage coach line to Fort Abercrombie in June 1859: Alvin C. Gluek, Jr., *Minnesota and the Manifest Destiny of the Canadian Northwest: A Study in Canadian-American Relations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 65), p. 139.
19. For more details on this “grand success,” see Gluek, pp. 128–140.
20. For a brief biography of Alonzo Barnard (1817–1905), see www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/barnard_a.shtml
21. For a brief biography of Walter Robert Bown (1828–1903), see www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/bown_wr.shtml
22. For a brief biography of Henry Martin Robinson (1845–1907), see www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/robinson_hm.shtml
23. For a brief biography of Thomas Spence (1832–1900), see www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/spence_t.shtml
24. Garland cites J. W. Daffoe’s explanation that the mob—mostly made up of recent immigrants from Ontario—were expressing their frustration at not being able to vote in the upcoming federal election because Manitoba’s election lists were two years old. Judging from the other incidents which occurred at this time, including Orange mobs invading St. Boniface, suggest that there was more to it than that: Gerhard Ens, *From Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 145. US consul J. W. Taylor described the situation as “an alarming condition of affairs” amounting to “anarchy”. Taylor to State Dept, 22 September 1872, quoted in Hartwell Bowsfield, “The United States and Red River Settlement”, *Manitoba Historical Society Transactions Series 3*, Number 23 (1966–1967 season), www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/3/unitedstatesredriver.shtml For a brief biography of Joseph Royal (1837–1902), see www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/royal_j.shtml
25. For a brief biography of Frederick Edward Molyneux St. John (1838–1904), see www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/stjohn_fem.shtml
26. *The Manitoba News-Letter*—printed with some of the equipment formerly belonging to *The Nor’Wester*—ran from 1870 to 1871. For a brief biography of Patrick Gammie Laurie (1833–1903), better known for establishing and editing the *Saskatchewan Herald* in Battleford, see www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/laurie_pg.shtml

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Imagining Winnipeg

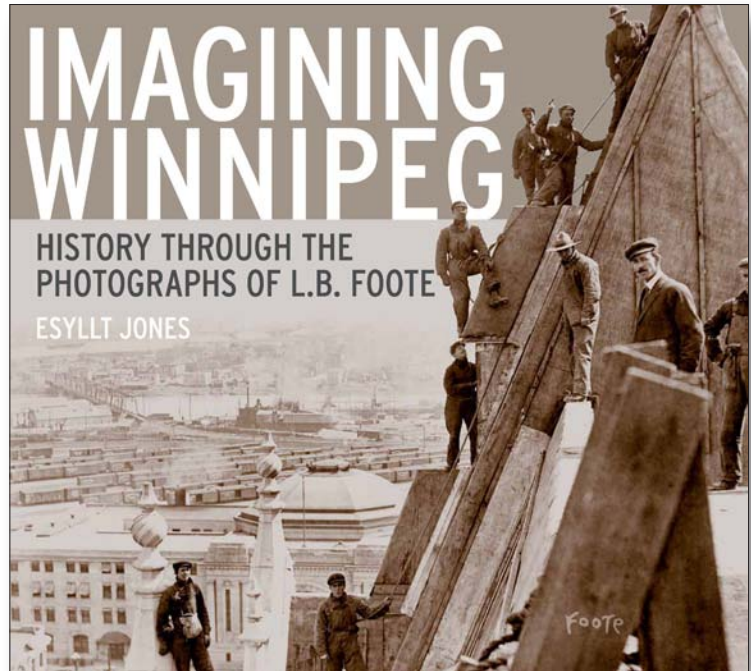
History through the Photographs of L.B. Foote

by Esyllt W. Jones

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Esyllt W. Jones is a history professor at University of Manitoba and is the author of the award-winning *Influenza 1918: Death, Disease and Struggle in Winnipeg*.



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Regatta at the Winnipeg Canoe Club on Dunkirk Drive, 1915. N2153



Free Press carriers' toboggan party at River Park, Osborne Street and Churchill Drive, 1919. N2205



L.B. Foote with workers building tunnel under the Red River between Winnipeg and St. Boniface, 1918. N2378

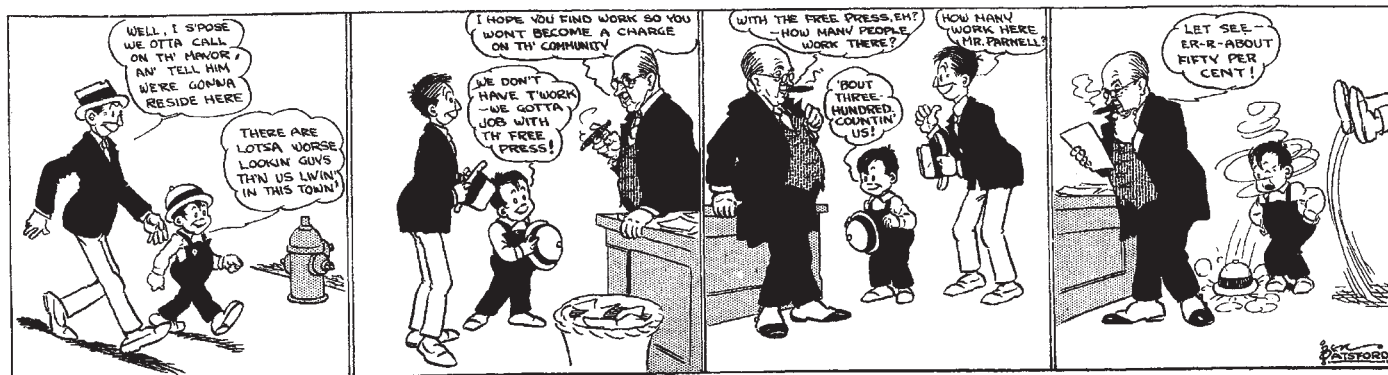
Batsford Hits the Big Time

by Kevin Rollason

UNK AND BILLY

They Call on the Mayor

BY BEN BATSFORD



Manitoba Free Press, 20 June 1921, page 1.

Unk and Billy call on the Mayor. Humour typically does not age well because it is founded in the values and experiences of a time, so what one generation finds hilarious, the next one finds bewildering. This 1921 cartoon by *Free Press* cartoonist Ben Batsford, however, hit on a theme that seems to resonate with successive generations: that some civil servants working for the Winnipeg city government—in this case led by mayor Edward Parnell (1859–1922)—might not be providing full value for their salaries.

The Free Press was the first daily newspaper in Canada to have its own daily comic strip, which launched an international career for cartoonist Ben Batsford.

He was the first Canadian cartoonist to have his comic strips syndicated in the United States.¹ And he drew a comic strip for Edgar Bergen, one of the most famous ventriloquists in the world. Benjamin Theodore Batsford, who was the staff editorial cartoonist for many years with the *Manitoba Free Press*, used his comic talents to make a name for himself in the early 1920s.

Batsford started drawing a comic strip for the *Free Press* in June 1921 called at times “Unk and Billy” or “Billy’s Uncle”, but the cartoon was suspended in April 1922. An article in the *Free Press* on 5 April 1922 stated that its readers would want to know “the why and wherefore of the disappearance of this ‘Made in Winnipeg’ pictorial strip which has won so much popularity as a member of the *Free Press* ‘comic’ family during the past eight months. Well, there’s a reason.”²

Batsford’s cartoon had been picked by a New York syndicate, which, according to the *Free Press*, was the first time a Canadian cartoonist had been syndicated in the US. In the spring of 1922, “Unk and Billy” was already appearing in twenty American newspapers. At that point, Batsford packed up his pens, left Winnipeg, and headed to New York. The *Free Press* said that because Batsford was leaving the paper, “Unk and Billy” would be suspended until Batsford got himself settled. The paper also congratulated itself for its own role in Batsford’s success.

The *Free Press* is the first Canadian newspaper to inaugurate a daily comic strip of its own, venturing

into a branch of newspaper-making that had been confined previously to leading newspapers in five or six of the larger American cities and to large feature syndicates in New York and one or two other locations. The *Free Press* on this, as on many other occasions, showed its leadership in the Canadian fields.³

Batsford was born in Minneapolis in 1892, and, according to *Free Press* archives, he got his start at the newspaper in 1908. He wrote for the paper as well. In 1915, he even wrote a column called *Motoring*, but it was during the First World War years that he gained local fame for drawing cartoons for the paper.

Under the headline “Presentation to *Free Press* cartoonist”, a short story about Batsford in the *Free Press* in June 1917—which included a photograph of him in a military uniform—it stated he had left the paper to fight in the Great War after three years of drawing cartoons for the newspaper. The article said Batsford was presented with a gold wrist watch from his former fellow employees with the “wish expressed that Pte. Batsford would get close enough to the Kaiser to draw a cartoon of him”.



Kevin Rollason started out as a reporter at the Winnipeg Sun, but has spent most of his award-winning journalism career at the Winnipeg Free Press, where he also heads up the annual Pennies From Heaven campaign. He was the Winnipeg Press Club president in 1992.

Batsford Hits the Big Time

But during his time in Winnipeg, Batsford did more than draw editorial cartoons at the *Free Press*. He also dabbled in theatre. A *Free Press* article in December 1915, stated that the Walker Theatre would be presenting “The Passing Follies of 1915” presented by the Young Hebrew Dramatic Society and one of the featured skits would be “Two of a Kind”, which was “written by Benjamin T. Batsford, a promising young author of this city”. Batsford returned from the war and was reported as testifying before the preliminary hearing of the Winnipeg Strike leaders in 1919.

The popular “Little Annie Rooney” comic strip, created to compete with the hit “Little Orphan Annie” comic strip produced by a rival newspaper syndicate, began in 1927, but according to Wikipedia Batsford came on board to produce it for the year 1930. Just four years later, Batsford created Frankie Doodle for another comic strip syndicate, a comic strip again influenced by Little Orphan Annie, but this time about a curly red-haired boy. The comic strip ran until 1938.

The next year Batsford was in New York and he was tapped to draw the new comic strip authored by radio comedian and ventriloquist Edgar Bergen. The strip was to be about Bergen’s famous creations Charlie McCarthy and Mortimer Snerd.

A front page article in the 7 July 1939 *Free Press* shows a special cartoon Batsford drew just for Winnipeg readers,

with McCarthy yelling at Snerd to “make a speech about how Ben Batsford used to be staff cartoonist on the *Winnipeg Free Press*”.

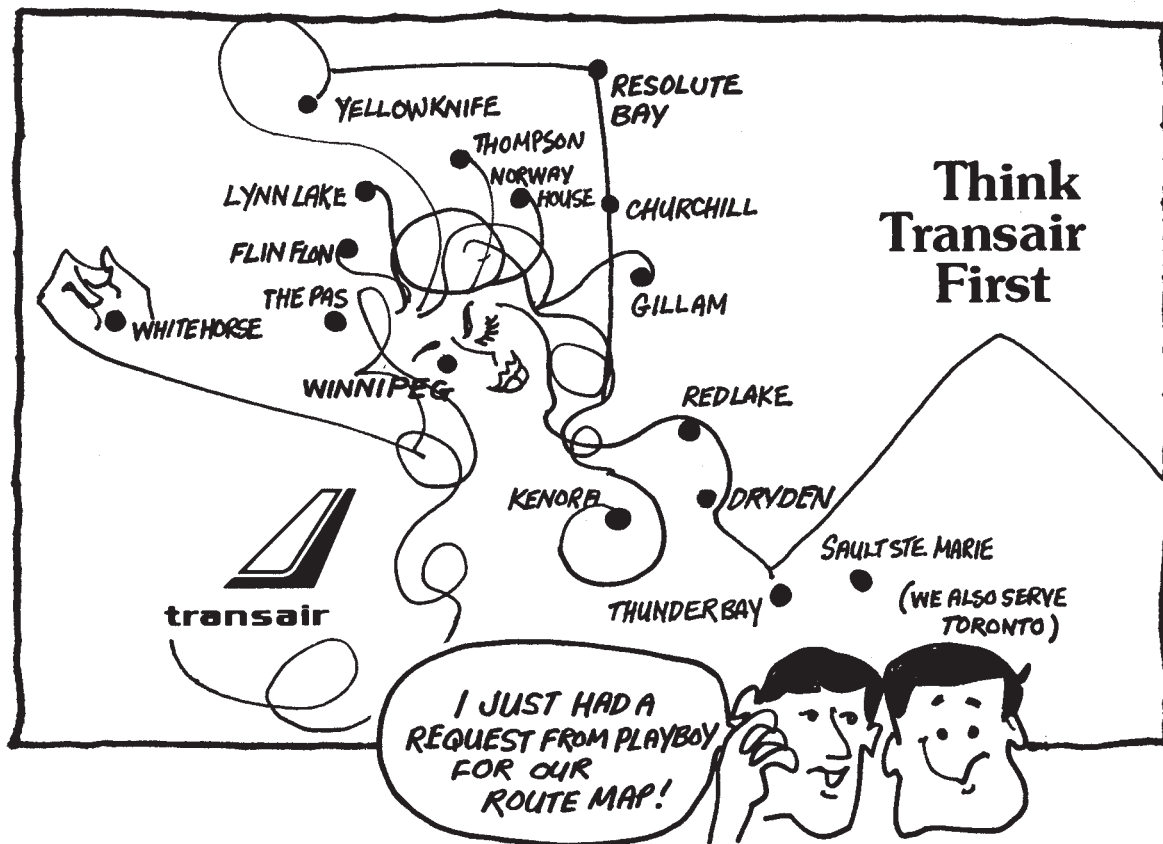
The article says, in part, that during the interview the reporter “enjoyed hearing Ben talk, not only for the interesting things he said, but because his talk sounded so homelike. “His voice sounded like Winnipeg where he grew to manhood and got his start in life as a cartoonist on the *Free Press*.”

Unfortunately, it appears Batsford only did the comic for a year. According to his obituary, Batsford later was a cartoonist for the *New York Times*. He died on 11 February 1977 in East Northport, New York.

But Batsford left his mark in Winnipeg. He was part of the rejuvenation of the Winnipeg Press Club in early 1922, and before leaving the city, he designed the Press Club’s logo. When the club opened its newly decorated clubrooms on Main Street in 1953, the logo had a place of pride ... inlaid into the carpet.⁴ To this day, the Press Club continues to use Batsford’s logo. ☞

Notes

1. *Manitoba Free Press*, 5 April 1922, page 16.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. Winnipeg Press Club, *Beer & Skits Program*, 1953, page 10.



Winnipeg Press Club, 1976 Beer & Skits Program, page 50.

Mile High (Press) Club. This is an example of the over-the-top ads placed by prominent local and national companies in the annual Beer & Skits program, from the 1976 edition.

Cool Things in the Collection:

“Signing In”-The Press Club Guest Books

by Garry Moir

For an autograph collector, they are a veritable treasure trove. Names from around the world appear on the pages of the Winnipeg Press Club guest books, illustrating the prestige the Club once held when it was the place to see and be seen. The guest books contain the signatures of entertainers, athletes, politicians, and of course broadcasters and journalists.

Bud Abbott

How big were the names to show up at the Winnipeg Press Club? You don't get much bigger than “Bud” Abbott of the famed Abbott and Costello comedy team. He was in Winnipeg in 1961 as part of a North American tour. Abbott was attempting to resurrect his career and by this time had a new partner, Candy Candido, known for his work with Jimmy Durante. Candido also signed the guest book.

There was no doubt a “whole lot of shakin’ ” going on when the recording group The Crew Cuts dropped by for a visit.

Best known for their 1954 hit song “Sh-Boom,” the New York-based foursome from Toronto was in Winnipeg for a concert. With them, they brought another contemporary singing sensation, Anita Bryant, from Miami, Florida. Other prominent entertainers whose names appear in the guest books include Larry Linville of “M*A*S*H*” fame, country and western stars Homer and Jethro, Harry Douglas and the Deep River Boys, Robert Goulet, and the husband and wife musical team Les Paul and Mary Ford. On 4 March 1975, Linda Susan Boreman stopped by the Winnipeg Press Club. She signed in using the name for which she was best known ... Linda Lovelace.

On the sports front, legendary Winnipeg Blue Bomber coach Bud Grant dropped by the Press Club on several occasions. His archrival Eagle Keys, the head coach of the Edmonton Eskimos, also put in an appearance. The entire Hollywood Ice Review, which included a number of US Olympic figure skaters, was at the Club on 8 December 1955. The signatures of former NHL

stars Terry Sawchuk, Bill Juzda and Alf Pike can be found in the guest books. Then there was the night the professional wrestlers showed up, led by “Canada’s greatest athlete” Gene Kinski, the villain “Mad Dog Vachon”, and all around “good guy” Greg Gagne.

Judging by the guest books, the Club was an ideal place for politicians and journalists to rub shoulders and share drinks.

Premier Duff Roblin was a fairly regular visitor. In fact, virtually every

Manitoba premier showed up at the Club at one time or another, as did many provincial cabinet ministers, civic politicians and members of the police department. NDP leader Tommy Douglas no doubt entertained the members when he visited in 1961. The Ambassador from Ireland dropped by, as did the Japanese Consul and New Zealand’s High Commissioner.

Bob Woodward, the *Washington Post* reporter who helped unearth the Watergate scandal and bring down President Nixon, signed the guest book. So did cartoonists Ben Wicks and Lynn Johnston, and political columnist



In addition to signing her name in the guest book, cartoonist Lynn Johnston left a sketch during her 1989 visit.

Charles Lynch, along with a host of other working journalists from around the country and indeed around the world.

Santa Claus signed the guest book ... probably more than once. A couple of other signatures, however, are much less believable—those of Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe, both of whom supposedly dropped by the Club. Didn't happen, but *had* either of them ever been to Winnipeg, there is a very good chance they would indeed have signed the register at the Winnipeg Press Club. ☺

PRESS CLUB OPEN TODAY

Saw Goes to the Club Opening

31-Year Quest Reaches Goal

Congrats From All Over

Congratulations and best wishes from the land of rum and big fishes.

That was the text of a wire from Irving Wigton of the Halifax Press Club to Quebec Masterpieces of the Winnipeg Press Club early Friday morning. And it was the first of dozens of wires which poured in from everywhere in Canada with best wishes for the Winnipeg Press Club on the opening of its new home at 300 Main St.

The great "Red" radio sign from the Atlantic to the Pacific blazed out in the headlines to wish us well in our new venture. Greatly appreciated reference from ex-Winnipegger Alvin Hill at Calgary.

Allen expressed the hope that "Main Street sidewalk under your third story windows are properly patrolled with beam rubber."

Here are some of the wires:

MacNeill, Sydney, N.S. Press Club:
From Canada's finest press club in the east to the finest in the west, greetings. May you grow as we have grown and prosper as we have. Congratulations and best wishes to you and all members of the club.

George Finlay, Canadian Press Vancouver:
Greetings from two charter members of the Winnipeg Press Club. Frank Turner and George Finlay, and best luck at grand opening. Best wishes from Andrew and Iain Chever.

Bob Campbell, Kingston's Men's Press Club:
From the second to one of the oldest organizations in the Winnipeg Press Club on the official opening of new club rooms in Winnipeg. We are in same position as you have been in for 31 years past. All the bestest regards.

Star Mackinnon, Kent Press Club:
Congratulations in twentieth anniversary of your press club and also on the opening of new club rooms. The Star Press Club with headquarters in Chatham, Ontario, wish you and all members the utmost in success.

Edna Johnson, Canadian Press, London, Ont.
Cheers and a happy birthday on the 31st anniversary of your club. May it always stay when you're not present.

Jack Gartin, Barrie Observer:
We remember in the real sense you on this memorable day. Regards to Wills (Karl).

Norm Johnson, Toronto Star's Press Club:
Congratulations on your new club building. Winnipeggers in Toronto here at Press Club will know where you got the \$10,000. That value is four years to get out of debt. We're proud of you and "fronthead on contentment." Your anniversary will be always honored at our club.

Allen Hill, Calgary Herald:
Congratulations to the Winnipeg Press Club which after 31 years glorious period has now opened its 31st year with a happy new club. They stand first on the ground under your third floor windows properly fitted with beam rubber as parents will honor smartly mentioned in the Winnipeg Press Club's 31st anniversary celebration. Best wishes and good luck on the opening of new club rooms. As the great gentleman Nate Zimmerman.

Executive, Newsman's Club of B.C.:
From the Newsman's Club of British Columbia to the Winnipeg Press Club, congratulations and congrats on your new premises. We salute you and our members for 31 years. So far we have had no problems. So far we have three years. Good Luck.



'Great Idea to Invite All Those Prominent People We Tear Apart in the Papers'

Stars Will Shine at 300 Main St.

Stars of the entertainment world will shine for the Winnipeg Press Club as a result of an agreement reached with Don Carlos and, as a result, Press Club members can expect to see among their guests Lena Horne, Rudy Vallee, the Mills Brothers and their ilk.

The Don's feature attraction this month is Nellie Lutcher and maybe she will be our first visiting star.

In the meantime, the Don is still operating out on the highway. If you really want to see Nellie be there for sure March 19 to 25.



Beer And Skits April 18

The Winnipeg Press Club's 31st annual Beer and Skits are on the boards April 18 at the Fort Garry Hotel. This is a notable anniversary, and the directors of the club promise a sparkling program of song and skits. Tickets are available from the Club Office, 300 Main St. They will hold back enough for every club member until March 21. After that the scramble will be on, and an early sell-out is anticipated. Chairman of the Beer and Skits committee is Charlie MacFarlane. George Wright will again be the producer and chief star.

EXECUTIVE

President, Eric Wells, Tribune; Vice-president, Albert Boothe, Free Press; Treasurer, Christopher Young, Tribune; Secretary, Charles Gunning, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation; Club Officers: Max Newton, Montreal Press; Club Members (in order of rank): Charles MacFarlane, Bill Johnson, J. J. MacPherson, J. J. MacPherson, Canadian Pacific; Bill Johnson, Manitoba; Jack Wells, Radio Station CKY; Andrew Hill, Manitoba; Andrew Hill, Manitoba; Andrew Hill, Manitoba.

And Still More Bouquets

These were among the telegrams received by the Press Club this week: Max Newton, Montreal Press; Bill Johnson, Manitoba; Jack Wells, Radio Station CKY; Andrew Hill, Manitoba; Andrew Hill, Manitoba; Andrew Hill, Manitoba.

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Roberts At the Opening

Tribune photographer Gordon Roberts dropped in on the new Press Club, and this is what he saw: Left, the lounge, just before the crowds invaded. Centre, President Eric Wells calls his wife to say he can't get home for dinner. Right, the Press Club crew. Just look at that crew, will you?



THE WINNIPEG PRESS CLUB today opens its doors to its members and friends. After 31 years of vagabond existence, the club has a roof over its head and a rug under its feet.

The story of the Press Club's search for a resting place is as old as the club itself. The goal has often seemed close; today it has been reached.

Three hundred Main St. is the last and most luxurious of a series of potential Press Clubs inspected by members of the executive. It has much to recommend it:

- An atmosphere of old-world respectability derived from the influence of the Progressive Conservative party, which was the previous tenant.
- An atmosphere of prosperity derived from the proximity of the Carleton Club.
- An atmosphere of thirst, derived from three invigorating flights of stairs.

As now decorated and furnished, 300 Main St. is certain to become the gynosour for newspapermen across Canada and for gentlemen of leisure throughout Manitoba.

Eventually the top artists of The Tribune and Free Press will apply their brushes to the walls in hot competition with the photographers for the attention of visitors.

The club has received advice and help from many individuals who are not members, notably from Dave Thomas of Eaton's and Carl Carlson, formerly of Drewry's, now of Dominion Motors.

President Eric Wells has been the man behind the clubrooms drive, strongly supported by vice-president Albert Boothe. Bill MacPherson, chairman of the clubrooms committee, is the man who did most of the house-hunting and a great deal of the detailed organizing.

At its most recent annual meeting, the Press Club decided to invite radio men in allied fields of work to join the newsmen in their new quarters. Charlie Gunning of the C.B.C., treasurer of the club, has headed the membership drive and will doubtless top his objective.

The club has been particularly gratified by the support which has come for many of its activities from outside the city.

Winnipeg has produced a long line of distinguished newspapermen who now live elsewhere. From them came the original impetus for a memorial fund in honor of the late N. B. Zimmerman, a past president of the club and for many years the guiding spirit behind the annual Beer and Skits. Other past presidents, notably Jack Thornton and Gordon Sinclair have given us help from afar.

And the congratulatory telegrams which appear on this page are evidence of the esteem in which the club is held by newspapermen across the country, particularly those who have once been members.

Limited edition. This front page of the Winnipeg Tribune from 14 March 1953 was not the one the vast majority of readers saw. A few copies highlighting the Press Club's new headquarters were printed and wrapped around the rest of the paper and handed out as souvenirs. It features the only-known photo of the clubhouse's interior and an unidentified woman posing on the carpet inlaid with the WPC logo designed by cartoonist Ben Batsford.

Cool Things in the Collection: Chapel Board: In Reverse and Backwards

by Sheilla Jones

The Winnipeg Press Club “chapel board” is a curious object that recalls a time in printing when publications were crafted by monks. The board has a list of the names of Press Club presidents on one side, printed backwards in reverse type, with a mirror set at 75 degrees to more easily read the names.

The chapel board was a gift designed by James H. Richardson, the long-time managing editor of the *Los Angeles Examiner*, and presented to the Press Club in 1958. It carried the inscription “Every man is the sum of his words” to remind reporters of their duty in the tough job of journalism.

Richardson knew quite a lot about how difficult a reporter’s job could be. Young Jimmie had been expelled from Kelvin High School in 1912, and his father promptly arranged a job interview for him with Col. G.C. Porter,¹ the scowling editor of the *Winnipeg Telegram*. As Richardson later recalled, Porter tried his best to discourage him.

“Look, kid,” the Colonel had said, according to Richardson, studying the butt of a frayed cigar, “this is no business for a nice young boy. It’s a tough hard business, and it’s dirty too. You work hard and you work long and you never make any money. You never get to live as other people do. You’ll get to know cops and thieves and pimps and whores by their first names. You see things that are better unseen and get to know things that are better unknown. I say you work hard and you work long and never make any money and you grow old and tired and sad and wind up wondering what the hell happened to you.”²

Richardson was not to be dissuaded. He had retired from the *Examiner* and was in Winnipeg in 1958 as the keynote speaker for the Press Club’s 70th anniversary dinner³ and 25th anniversary of Beer and Skits.

In a report on the chapel board in 1980, WPC archivist Eric Wells noted that Richardson’s 1954 biography, *For the Life of Me*, “confirmed his notoriety as a hell-raiser. He was the subject of considerable interest at the time for his stories on American gangsters. Richardson carried the sobriquet of ‘The Last of the Terrible Men’, which suggested the days of rambunctious journalism were gone for good.”⁴

The chapel board was a gift of appreciation from Richardson. “It carries the names of all the presidents,” wrote Wells, “cast in reverse type as was the common newspaper practice when all persons working on the news could read backwards and upside down—an accomplishment long since extinct. That’s why the mirror was added to the board.”



Winnipeg Press Club

The Winnipeg Press Club chapel board was a gift from retired *Los Angeles Examiner* editor Jim Richardson in 1958. He was the keynote speaker for the Press Club’s 70th anniversary dinner. It stands 32 inches high, with a mirror on one side to reflect the backwards and reverse type familiar to newspaper people who worked in the days of lead type.

The term “chapel board” has a very long history. It dates back to medieval times when monks in monasteries prepared texts, and their workroom was called a chapel. A 1683 text on the business of printing states that “Every Printing-house is by the Custom of Time out of mind, called a Chappel; and all the Workmen that belong to it

Chapel Board

are Members of the Chappel : and the Oldest Freeman is Father of the Chappel.”⁵

The name stuck. The inscription on the Press Club’s chapel board disappeared a long time ago. “Alas,” said Wells, “Jim Richardson’s inscription disappeared in the renovation of the board. It read: ‘Every man is the sum of his words’ which he intended as guidance to aspiring reporters, and a judgment on others who had gone astray. The dictum was adapted from Cervantes who used the noun ‘works’ and the aphorism was adjusted to newspapering in Richardson’s rewrite.”

The two plaques near the top read:

Retired City Editor, Los Angeles Examiner Jim Richardson returned to Winnipeg to officially complete 46 years of newspaper service where he started in 1912 on the Winnipeg Telegram as sports writer. On April 25th, 1958, Richardson, “The Last of the Terrible Men” was guest of honor at the 70th anniversary of the Winnipeg Press Club and the 25th Silver Jubilee edition of the club’s Beer and Skits.

The plaques below list the Press Club presidents, backwards and in reverse, starting from 1922. This list was



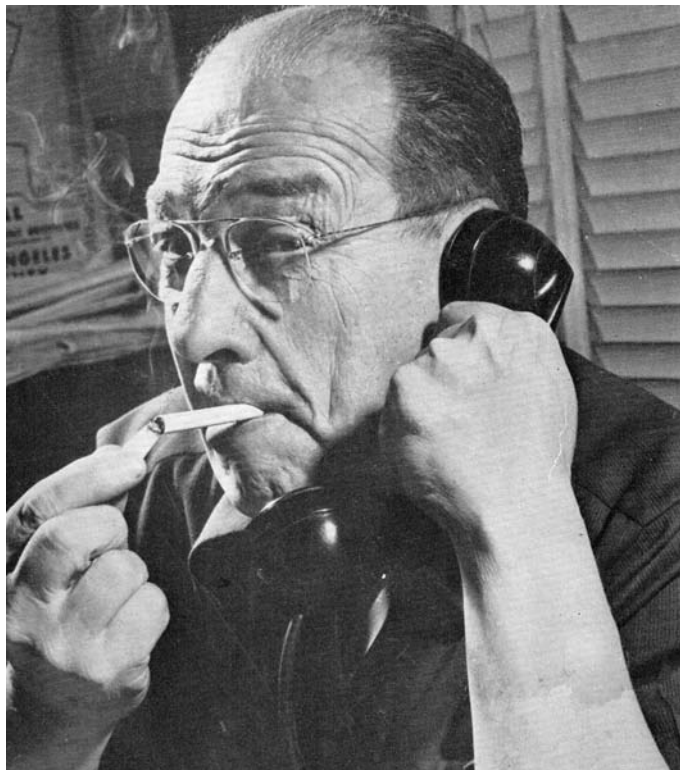
Winnipeg Press Club

Printed backwards and reversed, the Winnipeg Press Club logo, with the inscription below reading “This chapel board presented by James H. Richardson to honor past presidents of the Winnipeg Press Club.”

updated in 1976. The plaque at the bottom of the board gives a thumbnail history of the Press Club, as best it was understood in 1958. ☞

Notes

1. WPC Yearbook / Beer & Skits Program 1958, page 26.
2. James H. Richardson, *For the Life of Me: The Autobiography of a Great Newspaperman*, Putnam, as quoted in the WPC Beer & Skits Program 1958, page 26.
3. In 1958, the Press Club still believed it had started in 1888 with the big reunion of Winnipeg’s newspaper men. It wasn’t until much later that the club discovered it had started a year earlier in 1887.
4. Eric Wells, 17 February 1980, “Chapel Board”, WPC Archives.
5. Joseph Moxon, 1683, *Mechanick Exercises: Or, the Doctrine of Handitworks, Applied to the Art of Printing*, London, page 356.



University of Winnipeg, Western Canada Pictorial Index 39662

James Hugh “Jim” Richardson (1894–1963) was the chain-smoking, curmudgeonly editor for the *Los Angeles Examiner* when, in 1958, he returned to Winnipeg for the Press Club’s 70th anniversary. In 1912, he started a 46-year career in the news business after being expelled from Kelvin High School and getting a job at the *Winnipeg Telegram*.

Future History

In the next issue of *Manitoba History* ...

“The Selkirk Settlement Revisited: 1812, As Seen From 2012”

The proceedings from a symposium organized by the Manitoba Historical Society in Spring 2012, commemorating the bicentenary of the arrival of the Selkirk Settlers at the Red River Settlement.

www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/71



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We're all about the
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