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## 160 YEARS OF REPORTING THE NEWS

### H. David Vuckson

For 160 years from 1857 to 2017 the newspaper names *Enterprise* and its younger competitor (and eventual partner) *Bulletin* reported the news and kept Collingwood and surrounding rural areas informed. They were separate operations with very different editorial policies and politics until 1932 when, in the depths of The Great Depression, out of necessity for their survival, they amalgamated as *The Enterprise-Bulletin* and continued on for another 85 years.

In that pioneer era of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, the *Barrie Magnet*, established in 1847, was the first newspaper north of Toronto. It later became the *Northern Advance*. At the time, the site of downtown Collingwood existed as a “dismal cedar swamp”. The coming of the Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Union Railway in 1855 with Collingwood as its northern terminus changed all that and created a perfect opportunity for an enterprising individual to start up a newspaper. With the coming of the railway, Collingwood became a boom town practically overnight in its role as a major transportation link between Toronto and “the west” which, at the time, meant Chicago and outposts of civilization along the north shore of Georgian Bay and Lake Superior.

The enterprising individual who seized the opportunity was John Hogg, born in County Roscommon, Ireland on January 1, 1830. Hogg started up his weekly

newspaper *Enterprise* in January 1857, the year before Collingwood separated itself from control by Nottawasaga Township to become an incorporated town. After leaving his home in Toronto, Hogg had worked for a time in Barrie helping to start the *Barrie Herald* and the *Law Journal* but greater opportunities in Collingwood beckoned and he arrived in town in May 1856. Here, over a period of many years, he multi-tasked as a newspaper man, stationer, druggist and town politician. First elected to the Town Council in 1859, John Hogg would serve two terms as a Councillor, seventeen terms as Reeve, one term as Mayor (1884) and one term as Simcoe County Warden (1873). Hogg was also the first Town Clerk in 1858 but only for a few months when he was removed because of his political views. Years later, he occupied the office of Clerk again. In 1871 he published his map of Simcoe County, apparently sinking his life savings into that venture which was a financial failure. Following this he turned the operation of his newspaper over to his son William A. Hogg who, in turn, would serve four terms as Councillor and two terms as Mayor between 1889 and the first few years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. John Hogg died February 9, 1901 from pneumonia. From this point in time you have to wonder if these men did not feel that they were in a conflict of interest while simultaneously filling the role of Mayor and Editor and using their paper to influence public opinion.

Until March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1860 John Hogg's paper was printed in Barrie and delivered by the railway, his home on Second St. also serving as his Office. It was much the fashion for the 4-page newspapers of the day to contain, in addition to local news, world news and "serials" as well as ads for wonder-working cure-all medicines and elixirs, and the advertising revenue helped greatly to fund the operation.

For a short time, the *Enterprise* was the only show in town. The following year, *The Collingwood Journal* appeared and disappeared in the space of a few months. Then, on August 22, 1863, there appeared the first issue of another short-lived competitor *The Daily Review* "Published Every Morning In The Town Of Collingwood". The opening editorial by George Foreman stated,

*...we must confess that we feel no small amount of pride in being the humble means of establishing a daily paper in our midst and now that we have commenced, what is to us a rather serious undertaking, it remains with the people to say whether it will be one of the institutions of the town or not. If our efforts to furnish the earliest and most reliable news to the public are only appreciated, the "Daily Review" will become a fixture in Collingwood, if not, our experiment must fall to the ground. Alas, the Daily Review did indeed "fall to the ground".*

The *real* and lasting competition to the *Enterprise* came on July 13, 1870 when the *Bulletin* (also a weekly) was established by David Robson. Its first location was on the second floor of a three-storey building that, eleven years later, was destroyed in the Great Fire. The *Bulletin* was staunchly "Liberal" in its politics and editorial leanings whereas the *Enterprise* was staunchly "Conservative". The *Bulletin* was bought by William Williams and J. G. Hand in 1881. Hand retired in 1883, leaving Williams, and soon his son David, in charge. For six decades from 1870 until the early 1930's, under a succession of local owners and editors, the two papers would trade editorial insults and claim that more people read *their* paper compared to the other. Besides the "circulation wars", the *real* action was the political war of words over local politics with no holds barred that both entertained and/or infuriated the local citizens, depending on one's politics. Derogatory and slanderous comments that would lead to one being removed from a Facebook group today were standard fare in the newspapers of the era.

The 1875 *Poetical Directory Of Collingwood* had this to say about the two newspapers:

**John Hogg, Editor of the Enterprise.**

This valiant press, heralds the express,  
A telegram repeater,  
From Britain's bound, Dominion round,  
And States united, feature;  
A valiant shield in Riding field,  
And family adviser,  
Gives no applause to changing laws,  
For Fenian, spy or miser.

Will prices tell, how items sell,  
Town, City and Dominion;  
And represents the mental sense  
Of candidate's opinion.  
The total fix of Politics,  
And maxims of our leaders,  
In reason's ear gives best of cheer  
To half a million readers.

#### **D. Robson, Editor of the Bulletin.**

Since Sir John A. has went his way,  
McKenzie, his successor,  
Gives no applause to lords or laws,  
Or any proud oppressor.  
Little Mac will not look back,  
The plough holds by the handle,  
Will root the weeds, corruption, deeds,  
And money robbing-scandal.  
Thinks church and state have been too great,  
McKenzie's a dissolver,  
The Bulletin takes aim at sin,  
Exploding grand revolver.  
Will advertise goods and supplies,  
Trade, art and lawyers witty,  
Will prices tell, how items sell,  
In country, town or city.

On Sunday, September 25, 1881, Collingwood's "Great Fire" wiped out a large portion of the brick and wooden buildings on the east side of Hurontario St. in the block between Huron and Simcoe Streets. The *Enterprise* had the misfortune to be located in one of those buildings and was totally destroyed with only one third of its value insured: "W. A. Hogg, total loss \$6000.00; insured in the Phoenix for \$2000.00". The *Markdale Standard* described the business as "W. A. Hogg, *Enterprise* printing office, book bindery and book store". The *Bulletin* which was located out of the immediate fire danger zone in the massive brick Greaves Block (built in 1874 at the south-east corner of Hurontario and Huron Streets), published its coverage of the disaster on September 28<sup>th</sup>. The *Enterprise* didn't get back on its feet for a few months and, after it did, helped by its acquisition of the *Messenger*, a recent newcomer which first appeared November 30, 1877, was newly located on the west side of Hurontario St. and occupied the present brick

building immediately south of the Federal Building with the *Messenger* being its Saturday paper. In late October 1886 the *Bulletin* moved from the Greaves Block into the upper floor of the Telfer Block complete with a new Campbell [steam] Power Press (mechanized as opposed to hand-printing) just a few doors from its competitor the *Enterprise-Messenger*. Campbell presses were made in Taunton, Massachusetts by the Mason Machine Works from 1879 onward.

*Lovell's Business and Professional Directory of the Province of Ontario for 1882* gives the following listings [these would have been canvassed in 1881 the year of the Great Fire]:

***COLLINGWOOD BULLETIN***, weekly, annual subscription, \$1; Williams & Hands, proprietors and printers, Hurontario.

***COLLINGWOOD ENTERPRISE***, weekly, annual subscription, \$1; Wm. A. Hogg, proprietor and printer, Hurontario.

***Hogg, William A.***, bookseller and stationer and proprietor of the *Collingwood Enterprise*, [residence] Huron.

***Williams & Hands*** (William Williams, J. G. Hands), proprietors and publishers of the *Collingwood Bulletin*, [residence] Hurontario.

As an example of 19<sup>th</sup> Century quack remedies that were advertised daily in newspapers of the era, here is one such wonder medicine from the pages of the *Bulletin* of September 29, 1881, just days after Collingwood's Great Fire. This is from the Gary Medicine Co., Toronto, Ontario. It showed a drawing of a man stooped, balding and looking like death warmed up and, after taking the medicine, looking like a virile youth with a full head of hair. The text reads:

***GRAY'S SPECIFIC MEDICINE***—*The Great English Ecmedy* [sic], *An unfailing cure for Seminal Weakness, Spermatorrhoea, Impotency, and all Diseases that follow as a consequence of Self-Abuse as loss of Memory, Universal Lassitude, Pain to the Back, Dimness of Vision, Premature old Age, and any other diseases that lead to Insanity or Consumption and a Premature Grave. Full Particulars in our pamphlet, which we desire to send free by mail to everyone. The Specific Medicine is sold by all druggists at \$1 per package, or six packages for \$5, or will be sent free by mail on receipt of the money by addressing THE GARY MEDICINE CO., Toronto, Ont.,*

*Canada.* Apparently, in some stubborn cases, one package was not enough to rejuvenate the poor sufferer and he might need six. Other similar advertisements were for electric belts, Holloway's Pills and Ointment "for the alleviation and cure of most diseases to which humanity is heir" and for hair restorers.

Putting a newspaper together in those pioneer days was a laborious task requiring setting type by hand—one letter at a time—and this could be challenging. In Victoria, B.C. we had an eccentric politician named Amor de Cosmos ("Lover of the Universe") whose real name was Bill Smith. He started a newspaper in Victoria in 1858 during the gold rush and later became a provincial and federal politician. It is said that typesetters ran into trouble when setting type for his speeches because they kept running out of the capital letter "I". He died insane in 1897. Typesetting became so much easier in the mid 1880's when a German watch/clockmaker, Ottmar Mergenthaler, invented the Linotype machine which cast "lines of type" using molten lead. No less an inventor than Thomas Edison called the machine "the 8<sup>th</sup> wonder of the world". It revolutionized the newspaper business, enabling mass production.

Ownership of the *Bulletin* had changed by at least the early 1880's when J. G. Hand and William Williams took over. The name William Williams is revered in Collingwood educational circles for he was the Head Master/Principal and Modern Language Master of Collingwood Collegiate Institute from 1873 to 1901. His frozen gaze that made him look stuffed and mounted in a long-exposure 19<sup>th</sup> Century photograph stared at us from the corridor wall at C.C.I. Perhaps it still does. His equally famous son, David Williams, that great guardian of Collingwood's history at the Huron Institute Museum, became the Editor at the *Bulletin* in November 1886 when the previous Editor, J. A. Currie, moved to Toronto to take a job with a daily paper there. In 1898 after multiple moves since 1870 to various rented premises, the paper moved into its new brick building at 27 Simcoe St. On April 21, 1906 the *Bulletin* launched its weekend edition called *The Saturday News*. Like his competitors at the *Enterprise* before him, David Williams served his time as Mayor of Collingwood in 1933 and 1934 perhaps with less perception of a conflict of interest because, after 1932, the *Enterprise-Bulletin* was supposed to be free from politics.

Two newspaper families in which the father was succeeded by the son piloted Collingwood's two main newspapers for decades until The Great Depression. By 1932 both papers were facing financial ruin. After 62 years of not even attempting to hide their dislike of each other, it must have been a difficult choice for William Hogg and David Williams to have the courage to admit that Collingwood could no longer support two newspapers and that their only hope for survival was to combine their resources, bury their respective political hatchets, and bravely face the uncertain future together. Thus was born the *Enterprise-Bulletin Presses Ltd.* in July 1932, headquartered in the *Bulletin* building at 27 Simcoe St. Note the plural word "presses" because in addition to the one large press that printed the weekly newspaper, there were multiple small presses for "job printing" as well. William Hogg died in February 1942; David Williams died in October 1944 and the next generation took up the cause.

Before modern printing methods took over, the Simcoe St. building was a fascinating place, a veritable time warp, especially for those fascinated by the workings of complicated machinery. I visited the building frequently in the 1950's and 60's to watch that machinery at work. On the ground floor, behind the front office, were numerous job printing machines that produced hand bills, posters, business forms, stationery, tags, labels, receipts, wedding invitations, business cards, tickets, envelopes, etc., this activity constituting a substantial portion of the revenue. In this area there was also a Linotype machine. Out in the rear portion of the ground floor was the huge, clanking Duplex press that printed the two-section weekly paper which cost 10 cents to buy at the corner store. On the upper floor there was another Linotype machine and a few more job printing machines. One time when I was watching the second floor Linotype in action, the operator produced my name on a lead slug as a souvenir. The second floor was also the site of "the crypt" or "morgue" where bound copies of past issues of the two papers going back to the 1800's were stored. The front office was a place where you could arrange to place a classified ad, buy a new typewriter ribbon or a product to clean your typewriter from Ruth Gibbons. Also, in the 1950's at the end of the school year in June we would go down to the newspaper office and

scan the lists in the front windows looking for our name to learn if we had passed into the next grade.

In a long-standing tradition going back decades to before the two papers amalgamated, to a time when telephones were rare in the farming country (think of the wooden wall telephones with internal dry cell batteries and a crank to ring the operator as seen in old movies), various rural correspondents would send in their reports, some typed, some hand-written or “hand-scratched” in some cases, about the goings on in the small communities scattered around the area. They were “social columns” that told about what people were doing in the farming communities. The headlines read “News From Ravenna” or “Maple Valley News” and so on. A typical item went something like this: “Jessie Dinglehooper visited Elsie Greenbush last Thursday afternoon and they had tea”, not something I’m sure everyone in Collingwood was waiting breathlessly to learn, but likely of interest to those who knew Jessie and Elsie. Too bad the correspondent didn’t tell us what brand of tea bags Elsie used. Another such item told of two men who had a good look at a bear standing on its hind legs somewhere up on the mountain. Walt Wingfield would have been impressed with this competition to his weekly letter to *the Larkspur Free Press & Economist*. These types of columns still had a presence in the *Enterprise-Bulletin* in the 1970’s but eventually faded out as the generation that revelled in those columns also faded away and as modern methods of communication in the rural areas superseded them.

One of my favourite items in the *E-B* was usually on the left side of the front page of the second section. There were brief items under the headings “50 Years Ago” and “40 Years Ago” telling of events that had occurred in town at those intervals in time (the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century). I was always fascinated with Collingwood’s past and loved the massive collection of photos that adorned the walls of the Huron Institute in the basement of the Carnegie Library, most of them with David Williams’ handwriting on them. Little did I realize at the time in my youth that one day late in life I would be writing about Collingwood history, firstly in a monthly column in that very same newspaper for a couple of years, and later, and continuing today, on the website of the Collingwood Historical Society.

When David Williams died in 1944 ownership of the newspaper passed to his nephew R. W. (Dick) Irwin. Irwin died in 1968. In 1969, 112 years of family ownership ended when Irwin's widow sold the paper to Thomson Newspapers, a large corporation which owned a great number of weekly and daily newspapers in North America, including several in Simcoe County in Barrie, Orillia and Midland. Fresh capital flowed in to modernize the operation and the equipment. When the changeover from hot metal type to cold type offset printing (phototypesetting) came during Jack MacMurchy's time as Editor, the old Duplex press came to the end of its days in 1968 and was scrapped. The last time I saw it, the pieces were piled outside the rear of the building in the back lane (when I worked during the summers as an Office Boy/Messenger in the Shipyard, I rode my bike up the lane from Huron to Simcoe St. as a quick shortcut). This ancient press which had Patent dates on it from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century was replaced by Goss Community Press units. Where there had been one ancient press at the back of the building since 1898, in 1968 there were now four Goss press units, each of which could print four pages, enabling the production of a 16-page newspaper, and the ability to print more newspapers in one hour than the old press could print in an entire day. The Duplex Printing Press Co. of Battle Creek, Michigan, was founded in 1884 and was once the premier newspaper printing press builder in the United States. The Goss Printing Press Company was founded in 1885 in Chicago.

In the pioneer days when newspapers were the only means of mass communication other than the town crier, the papers had a clear field for earning revenue from their advertisers. It was very different in modern times. When local competition emerged in the 1970's with the advent of the *Collingwood Times*, the available newspaper advertising revenue now had to be shared. Prior to this, the *Enterprise-Bulletin* had a slogan "You know that E-B classified ads work for you". Later, it was "E-B Want Ads Work Like Magic". In addition to two newspapers, there were also the Yellow Pages of Ma Bell. Then there was the local radio station CKCB needing advertising revenue. Advertising was the lifeblood of newspapers and with the advent of the *Times* the available "pie" of revenue now had to be sliced even thinner. Other publications of the *Shopping*

News type appeared for selling cars, trucks, used goods, whatever, and these took advertising revenue away from the newspapers too. The advent of the Internet added yet another blow and a huge one at that.

In November 1970 when the *Enterprise-Bulletin* was the only newspaper in town and the Internet had not even been thought of, Jack MacMurchy wrote on the subject of advertising:

*The role of the Enterprise-Bulletin today is not an easy one. The speed of modern communication and transportation leads to much unfair comparison. The extreme high cost of operation would stagger the publishers of fifty years ago. More than anything else, the newspaper's one weakness—and this involves all newspapers and periodicals—is its dependence upon advertising. Without this sale of space, a publication is dead. Today, more than at any other time, there is more competition for the advertising dollar. Not only is it needed to breathe life into the printed organ, it also stimulates the heart of radio, television, magazines, and countless issues promoting sporting events, fairs and other programmes. How thin can it be spread?*

Sometimes the classified ads appeared in print in the newspaper quite differently from what the customer had submitted. I placed a classified ad in the *Times* for my piano tuning service in the mid- 1970's. It started with, "Piano tuning, regulating, repairing" followed by my name and phone number. When it first appeared in print it said, "Piano turning, regulating, repairing.....". I called their classified department and tried to explain that I don't "turn" pianos and they said they would correct it. The following week the very same ad with the typo appeared again and right below it they printed the corrected one so that people now had a choice between a piano turner and a piano tuner. One person even called me Mr. Turner. As an example of how a typographical error can go badly sideways, readers are invited to look up online the *Dear Abby* column in which she relates the comical and exasperating results when a small town daily newspaper screwed up an ad for Mr. R. D. Jones who had a sewing machine for sale. When they tried to correct the initial typo over the next several issues, they

just kept digging themselves in deeper until Mr. Jones smashed his sewing machine and disconnected his phone.

Under Publisher George Czerny, the *Enterprise-Bulletin* moved from its tired 1898 building with the leaking roof, half a block east to a brand new building on the north-east corner of Ste. Marie and Simcoe Streets during the winter of 1988-89. The four Goss press units went with it and two more were added in the extra space available. During this time subscriptions were at an all-time high and the paper came out twice a week, but starting in 1994 there were several more changes of ownership as large media corporations bought and sold newspapers the way kids trade baseball cards. This would prove to be the downfall of dozens of corporate-owned newspapers in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. When they were no longer locally owned, their fate was in the hands of the balance sheets of big business.

Isabel Griffin (1914-2013) was a columnist and social reporter for the *Enterprise-Bulletin* from 1975 to 2011, hand-delivering her hand-typed submissions right to the end. She died on January 2, 2013, and on January 27th I woke up that morning and realized that in April 2013 it would be 50 years since Collingwood's beautiful Carnegie Library burned down in an arson fire and I thought I would like to write a story about it. I called my friend Christine Cowley and asked her if she could ask Ian Adams, the Editor at the *E-B* at the time, if he would be interested in such a story. It turned out that he was. The next thing I knew, I was given an opportunity to follow, in a small way, in Isabel Griffin's footsteps with a monthly column on Collingwood history.

This worked for two and a half years from April 2013 to October 2015 for a total of 27 columns of varying length but Editor Ian Adams, with whom I had a good working relationship, had moved on and as newer editors came and went, and with no local control of the paper's content, the goal posts of how many words I could submit kept changing as the paper's policies were being dictated from Barrie while, at the same time, the *Enterprise-Bulletin* proclaimed, "We are deeply rooted in the local history". On March 1, 2015 there was a new policy limiting columns to a maximum of 1000 words to ensure that "the same rules would be

applied to all columnists” but I was not told about this. Because newspapers earn their main revenue from advertising, sometimes my monthly stories had to be shortened to make advertising space but when one of them was cut in length by more than half, I realized this arrangement could go on no longer. At the time, the Editor lived in Barrie, commuting to Collingwood every day and the newspapers were printed in Ingersoll and trucked to Collingwood, just a small indication that the *Enterprise-Bulletin* was no longer a “community” paper.

In my stories I usually have a lot more to say than what will fit on an 8 1/2” x 11” page (600 words) but, at the same time that my submissions were being edited, another writer “with connections” was being given a *full page* in the *Enterprise-Bulletin* for his historical stories of Upper Canada, including photos and maps. When I questioned this I was told that the Regional Editor in Barrie had the final say on what appeared in the Collingwood paper and I should talk to her. Instead, I realized my time was up and I submitted no more stories. After a gap of several months in late 2015 and early 2016 the Collingwood Historical Society started publishing my monthly stories on their website. Little did I realize it then, but the *Enterprise-Bulletin* itself was living on borrowed time and would expire in two years as events in the age of the Internet took their course.

Beyond my relatively brief time as a columnist for the *Enterprise-Bulletin*, I also have a family connection to the newspaper business in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The descendants from the first marriage of my great-grandfather O’Brien’s older brother Fred were in the newspaper business in several towns in the state of Michigan for many years from 1888 right up into modern times, as publishers, editors and printers through several generations of that branch of the O’Briens, all of them working with words and ink.

As mentioned earlier, ownership of the *Enterprise-Bulletin* changed in 1969 from locally, family-owned to big city media/ giant corporation-owned, but the paper successfully continued its role as a voice in the community for many years thereafter. Subsequent years saw multiple changes of ownership as the large media corporations bought and sold newspapers as it suited their bottom line. This scenario played out to its finale in November 2017 when Torstar and

Postmedia announced a massive “swap” involving 41 newspapers, 36 of which were marked to be permanently closed down. It was claimed that in this age of digital news, the business models of these newspapers were no longer viable, citing declining advertising revenue and their rather small circulation. Several Simcoe County newspapers—household names with roots going back well over one hundred years—including the *Barrie Examiner* and the *Orillia Packet & Times* as well as the *Enterprise-Bulletin* simply ceased to exist at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, November 27, 2017, the employees learning of it only when they showed up for work that morning and going home in shock.

How times had changed. 60 years ago there was a joke that the radio would never take the place of the newspaper because you can't start a fire with yesterday's radio. In the 1960's the *Enterprise-Bulletin* ran a large display ad that said, “Young men—secure your future with a career at the *Enterprise-Bulletin* Presses Limited!” In 2017 there was no future and 160 years of ink and paper, news, information and commentary, small town tradition and service to the community came to an abrupt end and passed into history. We live in a very different world from the days of 1857 and 1870 when John Hogg and David Robson, respectively, launched their weekly newspapers in Collingwood. Our news and advertising now come to us from multiple sources. It used to be said that a local newspaper is “the soul of the community”. We are poorer for the loss of the *Enterprise-Bulletin* and its place in Collingwood history.

*David Vuckson, a native son of Collingwood and former columnist for the Enterprise-Bulletin is a great-grandson of pioneer Collingwood merchant R. W. O'Brien. His roots in town go back to 1875. David and his wife Pamela live in Victoria, B.C. where he writes his monthly Stories of Collingwood.*