

## Fort Collins Newspaper History

Fort Collins Local History Archive, updated 12/2010

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The following text is from *The History of Larimer County* by Ansel Watrous, Courier Printing & Publishing Company, Fort Collins, Colorado, 1911, pp. 158-160

As already stated, the *Express*, founded by Joseph S. McClelland in April, 1873, was the first newspaper printed and published in Larimer county. It was started as a Republican paper and remained as such until 1896, when it espoused the politics of the Colorado Silver Republican party and continued to advocate those policies until 1900, when it returned to the Republican fold and became, and still continues to be an able and influential exponent of the principles of that party. It has passed through several changes of ownership and is now owned, controlled, edited and published by George C. and J. G. McCormick under the firm name of McCormick Brothers. In 1881 the *Express*, then owned by H. A. Crafts, began issuing an afternoon daily edition, which was continued until 1884, when the daily was suspended. On May 28th, 1907, McCormick Brothers began issuing a morning daily edition of the *Express* in connection with their weekly, and the publications have been important factors in the upbuilding of the home of its adoption. The next newspaper venture was the *Standard*, founded in March, 1874, by Clark Boughton, who died a few months later. After his death the *Standard* was published by H. L. Myrick and W. W. Sullivan until 1876, when it suspended, and the press and material was sold to John Oliver of Black Hawk.

The Fort Collins *Courier* was founded in June, 1878, by Ansel Watrous and Elmer M. Pelton and the paper is still being published. It was started as a Democratic paper and at once became the organ of the Democratic party of Larimer county, but after a change of ownership, in February, 1899, it became an advocate of the principles and policies of the Republican party and is still a rigid adherent of those principles and policies. In May, 1882, the *Courier* began issuing an evening daily edition, which, however, was suspended in June, 1883, after a little more than a year's experience. The publishers found the field too narrow to support such a daily as they were circulating and, after sinking more than a thousand dollars in the venture, decided to quit. The effort to establish a daily newspaper on a profitable basis was renewed in March, 1902, and this was successful. The *Evening Courier* is now nearing its ninth volume and is in a flourishing condition. It has been prosperous from the very start and is now considered one of the solid, substantial institutions of the city. The *Courier* is owned by the Courier Printing & Publishing Company, Carl Anderson, manager.

The *Reporter*, the first newspaper published in Loveland, was founded by G. N. Udell on August 7th, 1880. Two months later the *Reporter* passed under the control and management of Frank A. McClelland, eldest son of the founder of the Larimer County *Express*, and he sold the plant and subscription list to George W. Bailey and John Smart early in 1882. Since then the *Reporter* has had several owners, editors and publishers. At present it is owned and ably edited by Ira O. Knapp, who has established for it a reputation for reliability and a high regard for the right in all things, as well as in the manner of dealing with all subjects treated in its columns, which has given the *Reporter* a high standing among the best people of the county. The *Reporter* is Republican in politics.

The Loveland *Leader* was started in 1883 by Horace P. Crafts, who discontinued its publication after a few months' experience in a field already well filled.

In 1885 S. W. Teagarden started the Larimer Count *Bee* in Fort Collins. Two years later the *Bee* disappeared from the Fort Collins newspaper field. It was Republican in politics and was started for the purpose of driving the *Express* to the wall, but failed in its mission. Then came two other newspaper ventures, which had short but ill-fared lives. The Larimer County *Republican* started, in 1889 and the Fort Collins *Gazette*, which made its appearance in 1892. They came upon the stage of action to "fill a long felt want" and that want proved to

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be a newspaper grave. The *Argus* was started in 1899, and after passing through several mutations and changes of owners and name finally became known as the Fort Collins *Review*, under which title it is still being published daily and weekly. The *Review* is the leading Democratic paper in the county. It is ably edited by Edward D. Foster and is published by the Review Publishing company. In 1903 the *Evening Star* appeared in the Fort Collins newspaper firmament under the editorial management of I. C. Bradley. It was small in size, but bright and snappy and its daily appearance was looked forward to with considerable interest for ten months, when it dropped below the horizon and passed out of sight.

Along sometime in the 90's, the exact date I am unable to give, Earl Harbaugh started the Loveland *Register*, which had a somewhat checkered career, finally passing off the stage of action in 1908. The Loveland *Herald*, Democratic, daily and weekly, was founded in 1907, and is still preaching the doctrines espoused and promulgated by Jefferson and Jackson in a sprightly and interesting manner. It has a large number of readers, an extra good advertising patronage and is steadily making money for its active, energetic and enterprising editor, Mark A. Ellison.

Two newspapers had their birth in Berthoud, the *Bulletin* and the *News*, only the first named surviving. The *Bulletin* is independent in politics and is a well edited and well managed local newspaper and is rendering excellent service in exploiting the resources, advantages and attractions of the Little Thompson valley, one of the richest and most prosperous agricultural sections of Colorado. J. S. Bailey is the name of the present editor and proprietor.

Though young in years, Wellington has given birth to two newspapers, the *News* and the *Sun*, the latter alone surviving. The *Sun* has changed hands several times, but is now owned and conducted by John E. Pope, an experienced newspaper man and practical printer, who is serving his clientage ably and well. It was founded in 1907, and has done much to advance the material, social and moral welfare of the far-famed Boxelder valley, of which Wellington is the commercial center.

In February, 1887, after Manhattan had become a booming mining camp with brilliant prospects, a newspaper called the *Prospector* was started to proclaim to the world the golden resources of its chosen home. The *Prospector* was published by the Manhattan Publishing company, of which Dr. M. A. Baker was president; I. R. Blevin, secretary, and F. A. McCarty, treasurer. The paper was short lived and passed out of existence within a year and the printing material was moved to Denver.

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The following text is from Patricia Gallagher "A chronology of the city's chronicles: Competition, transition mark history of newspapers in Fort Collins" printed in *The Coloradoan* section "Crossroads-Past" on April 15, 1984.

*"The past has been reviewed; the future will always be yet to be written, the present is composed of the period which began in 1937 . . . a period which extends to today and which gradually will be displaced by the future. It must be the task of a future investigator to add the next chapter."*

So wrote James R. Miller late in 1965 at the end of a series of stories about newspapers in Fort Collins.

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Indeed, the past had been reviewed. Miller, a former managing editor of *The Coloradoan*, wrote 17 stories outlining the history of newspapers in the city. The series represents the most comprehensive guide to *The Coloradoan*'s roots.

Those roots are deep. The paper's origins date back to 1873.

**April 26, 1873:** Joseph Simpson McClelland introduced the *Larimer County Express* to Fort Collins. Vol. 1 No. 1 of the *Express* was four pages long and included "Business Cards" (announcements of local businesses), a couple poems and a questionably humorous column called "Expressive."

The publisher promised to print "a newspaper ever on the side of Right, Truth and Justice, a foe to all monopoly."

McClelland set up shop in the 100 block of West Mountain Avenue on a free piece of land with \$500 worth of equipment. He charged a whopping \$2.50 for a year's subscription.

**June 29, 1878:** Ansel Watrous, a former local store clerk, founded the *Fort Collins Courier*, the first competitor for the *Express*. Forty years later, the papers would merge and become the *Fort Collins Express-Courier*, the forerunner of *The Coloradoan*.

The *Courier* would never achieve the financial stability that the *Express* would, according to Miller's account. The *Express* had the edge, he said, because it was first in town and because Watrous lacked business acumen.

What he may have lacked as a businessman, though, he recouped as a writer. He was noted for writing a history of Larimer County and for his 40 years as a newspaper editor and writer in Fort Collins.

**1880:** Henry A. Crafts bought the *Express* from McClelland and found seven years worth of paper stacked in the office. To clear the clutter, he set the stacks on fire and thereby destroyed evidence of the first seven years of journalism in Fort Collins.

**1899:** Carl Anderson and his sister, Mrs. Ralph (Maude) Goss, bought the *Courier*, and the paper soon began to yield a modest profit.

Both the *Courier* and the *Express* were weekly papers, although each had experimented with daily editions.

Anderson and his sister, for example, started publishing the *Courier* daily in 1902 at the request of an oil magnate. The magnate, Charles R. Page of Colorado Springs, wanted a daily paper for his daily advertisements. Page threatened to advertise with the *Express* if Anderson didn't fulfill his request.

Anderson introduced the *Evening Courier* on March 24, 1902.

In 1916, he would sell it to Morris Emmerson.

**1906:** James McCormick, an Iowa newspaperman, bought a half interest in the *Express* and his brother George bought the other half of the paper nine months later.

They put out their first edition May 1, 1907, and less than one month later introduced the *Morning Express*, a daily to compete with the *Evening Courier*.

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During the next decade, the paper continued to compete. But then in 1920, Emmerson sold the *Courier* to the McCormick brothers and Fort Collins soon became a one-paper town.

The papers retained their separate names, but the same stories – with new headlines – appeared in both. It was only when the papers' staffs were moved into the same building three years later that the first issue of the *Fort Collins Express-Courier* emerged.

It was circulated each weekday evening and Sunday mornings.

The *Express-Courier* and later the *Coloradoan* would continue to be produced at 145 E. Mountain Ave. for the next 50 years.

**March 30, 1928:** Alfred G. Hill and two associates bought The Express-Courier Publishing Co. Hill was the most aggressive newsman yet to assume the top position at a Fort Collins paper, according to Miller's series. He had a keen news sense, was a skilled ad man, and the news department flourished under his leadership, according to Miller's history.

**June 5, 1929:** A fire ignited in the basement of the newspaper building, spread to the upper level and eventually caused \$80,000 worth of damage. Major printing equipment was destroyed and much of the office equipment was badly damaged.

Newspaper staffers set up shop in other offices around the city and never missed a day of publication. The disaster became a point of pride with some. The ones who stayed began to refer to themselves as the B-Fers—before fire-ers.

Within two months, the *Express-Courier* staff was back in its own building. Ironically, 1929 was among the most financially successful of the seven years that Hill ran the paper. The next year would be even more successful.

**October 29, 1936:** Speidel Newspapers Inc. bought the *Express-Courier* and started running it Jan. 1, 1937. The company hired Earl V. Hitch as publisher. Five years later, on Sept. 1, 1942, Clyde Moffitt would assume that job.

**April 29, 1945:** The *Fort Collins Express-Courier* became the *Fort Collins Coloradoan*.

**December 20, 1976:** Speidel Newspapers merged with Gannett Co. Inc., one of the nation's largest newspaper companies.

**August 9, 1975:** *The Coloradoan* moved into its present building at 1212 Riverside Ave., as Richard Nixon announced his resignation as president of the United States. Despite the confusion of moving, the story made the paper.

**April 15, 1984:** The paper remains *The Coloradoan* and the building remains on Riverside Avenue. But the way the news is presented and produced is dramatically different. For an update on today's major Fort Collins daily newspaper, see the next edition of Crossroads.

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The following text is from “Plethora of publications came and went” by Coloradoan staff printed in *The Coloradoan* section “Crossroads-Past” on April 15, 1984

Although the *Coloradoan* – and before it, its predecessor the *Express-Courier* – has always been considered the primary newspaper in Fort Collins, the city was not without other papers.

No less than a dozen different newspapers were available from the late 1800s to the early 1900s. Most lasted about a year.

*The Fort Collins Standard* emerged on March 11, 1874, only a year after the founding of the first Fort Collins’ paper, the *Larimer County Express*. By 1875, the paper folded.

A paper called the *Larimer County Democrat* debuted in January 1906, and later was called the *Review*. The paper made an attempt to compete with the *Express* and the *Fort Collins Courier* (the two were separate papers at the time) by introducing a daily edition called the *Morning Democrat*. The *Express* and the *Courier* were then dailies, and each published their own weekly as well.

Local business leaders thought three dailies was one too many. So they initiated a petition drive asking the *Express* and the *Courier* to work out a way to eliminate the *Review*. The two leading papers bought out the *Review* and split the equipment and subscription lists.

From that time on, no other paper would seriously threaten the *Express* or the *Courier*.

That doesn’t mean they didn’t try, though. Papers with names like *The Bee*, *the Gazette*, *The Star*, *The Republican and Argus*, *The Beacon*, and *The Chronicle* cropped up yearly and then died after a short life.

It wasn’t until 1973 that the next competitor went to press. And that competitor, the *Triangle Review*, has survived.

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The following text is from Jeff Halverstadt “Newspapers leave an imprint on Fort Collins” Printed in *Triangle Review* April 16, 1980.

For a city of its size, Fort Collins has always had its fair share of press representation; indeed, at times it had more newspapers than it could successfully support.

The late 19<sup>th</sup> century was a golden age of newspapers here. No less than six newspapers published in Fort Collins before the turn of the century.

In those days, a newspaper promoted political causes as fervently as they pursued the news. Newspapers were identified with a particular political party and did what they could to support that party’s cause.

Foremost in the early days of Fort Collins journalism were the *Express* and the *Courier*, which later merged to become the *Express-Courier*, forerunner of today’s *Coloradoan*.

Joseph McClelland, a Civil War veteran and publisher of newspapers in Ohio and Illinois, put the first copy of the *Larimer County Express* on the streets of Fort Collins on April 26, 1873.

Larimer County has a population of about 1,500 at the time, and was dependent primarily upon the Denver papers as a source of printed news.

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Ansel Watrous, in his *History of Larimer County*, commended McClelland's effort in establishing the paper, saying his competitor's name should shine in county history for a thousand years. Watrous became editor of the rival *Courier* in 1878.

The *Express* met its first competition in March 1874, when Clark Boughton founded the *Standard*. Boughton died a few months after the paper's inaugural edition, and the *Standard* followed its founder into the ages when it faded from the scene in 1876.

The *Courier* first challenged in June 1878, and was the Democratic party's local paper until it fell into the Republican fold in February 1899.

Having lost its position as Fort Collins' sole newspaper, the *Express* began to issue a daily afternoon issue in 1881. The *Courier* followed suit in May 1882.

But, as noted in an issue of the *Courier*, the publishers "found the field too narrow" to support two daily papers, and by 1884, both papers had abandoned their efforts at daily publication. The *Courier* would resume its daily printing in March 1902, and it followed on May 8, 1907, when the *Express* would venture back into the daily field, publishing each morning.

Near the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century four papers leapt to life here. S.W. Teagarden established the *Larimer County Bee* in 1885, with the stated intention to "drive the *Express* to the wall." The *Bee* passed into obscurity in 1887.

Also taking a crack at the Fort Collins market were the *Larimer County Republican*, which was born and died in 1889, and the *Fort Collins Gazette*, which found its niche in the city's reading habits for part of 1892.

Noteworthy, too, is the *Fort Collins Argus*, a literary paper which overcame a shaky beginning and numerous changes in ownership before changing its name to the *Review*, and becoming the leading Democratic paper in the area.

After the turn of the century, the *Fort Collins Evening Star* completed 10 months' operation before failing in 1903, and the *Fort Collins Beacon* was in publication between 1906 and 1909.

Snipping criticism of "enemy" newspapers was rampant in the days as witnessed a remark in the *Express* of April 17, 1882.

While most of the nation's press was trying to support the actions of President Chester Arthur, who seven months earlier ascended to the White House upon the assassination of President James A. Garfield, others went their own way.

The *Express* condemned the *Denver Tribune* for its "bitter and unwarranted attack" upon Arthur and for calling Charles Guiteau, Garfield's assassin, an "estimable man."

The *Express* dismissed the *Tribune's* apparent tolerance for murders, saying the *Tribune* is very appropriately called a political crank.

And, so as not to appear too selective in their criticism, the *Express* noted "the *Cheyenne Leader* looks as if it had been printed on a washing machine."

On July 2, 1920, the *Weekly Express*, *Weekly Courier* and the *Larimer County Democrat* were combined under the name of the *Larimer County Independent*.

The *Independent* was edited by P.R. McDowell, and featured Associated Press wire stories. The paper was a weekly, published each Friday.

Springing onto the local scene on January 9, 1911 was the *Courier Farmer*, also edited by Watrous. This paper called itself "A Brand New Paper Devoted to the Agricultural and Kindred Interests of the State of Colorado," and though it seemed to see

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itself as a mouthpiece of the agrarian community, it carried a lot of stores of international interest.

Morally, the *Courier Farmer* said it intended to follow the example of the *Courier*, whose “pages have always been clean enough for any growing girl or boy to read without fear of immoral contamination.”

On Sunday, April 29, 1945, the *Express-Courier* underwent its final metamorphosis as it changed its name to the Fort Collins Coloradoan.

And then May 5, 1973, saw Volume 1, Number 1 of the *Triangle Review* and its proclamation: “The *Triangle Review* was born out of a conviction that Fort Collins is big enough to support a strong weekly in addition to a daily newspaper. We feel there is a need for an alternative that will give Fort Collins residents and businessmen an added perspective to what is happening here.”

Area readers evidently liked that “added perspective” as the *Triangle Review* soon found itself publishing twice a week and saw its circulation jump to 30,000 readers.

The *Triangle Review* was admitted to the Colorado Press Association, and in 1979 copped six awards—the most of any weekly newspaper in Colorado.

But, as all newspaper people know, the success of the *Review* or *Coloradoan* or *Courier* or *Independent* or *Express* or whatever is due to one thing: the people in Fort Collins, who are interested in what’s going on in their city.