

The Acton Free Press.

Eighty-Fifth Year.—No. 8.

ACTON, ONTARIO, THURSDAY, AUGUST 20th, 1959

Second Section.

First Free Press Editor's Faith in Future Justified 84 Years, Four Editors Later

It was in 1875 that Joseph Hacking, a printer from the Guelph Daily Advertiser, decided that Acton should have a newspaper and combining his funds and experience, he assembled the necessary equipment for printing a newspaper here, in the building that was then known as Matthew's Hall. This building has since been moved from its site on the corner of Mill and Willow Streets and is now occupied by Hotchen's Bakery.

The first issue of the Free Press came out on Dominion Day, 1875. It is significant then, that announcement of a new building to house the Free Press should be made so shortly after the anniversary of the paper. After two years of upstairs printing, Mr. Hacking persuaded the late James Matthews to build a one storey building adjoining, for the Free Press. Here, Acton's newspaper was printed for another two years before moving to the present site.

Mr. Matthews' building later served as Acton's Post Office and public-utilities-office until it was finally torn down from the present site of the Bank of Nova Scotia.

Building Remodelled

In 1904, the present Free Press building was completely remodelled with the present front being added. Up to that time a steam boiler was fired up every press day and the papers were printed on the old Prouty Press. A gas-engine was incorporated as motive power in 1904. About six or seven years later, another section was added for a new newspaper press which, however, didn't arrive until 1930, and incidentally, wasn't located in the new section built for it.

In March, 1949, another new section was added which doubled the size of the newspaper building and gave much needed room for the business that grew with the community.

A further addition to the building was made in 1957 to accommodate the new Goss Cox-n-type Press, which was installed in September of 1957. This completely built up the lot to which the Free Press had moved more than 60 years before.

Five editors have published the Acton Free Press during its 84 years. Joseph Hacking, founder of the paper, sold it in 1877 to Moore and Galbraith and in 1879 the Moore brothers, T. A. and H. P., formed a partnership to operate the Free Press and the plant and office was moved to its present site.

The partnership was not lengthy and T. A. entered the ministry where he rose to be head of the United Church of Canada. H. P. Moore continued to edit and improve the Free Press until he sold his interests to the present editor-in-chief, G. A. Dills, who for the past 32 years has been editor and publisher of Acton's newspaper.

The Dills Printing and Publishing Company including the two sons, Dave and Jun, was formed in 1954.

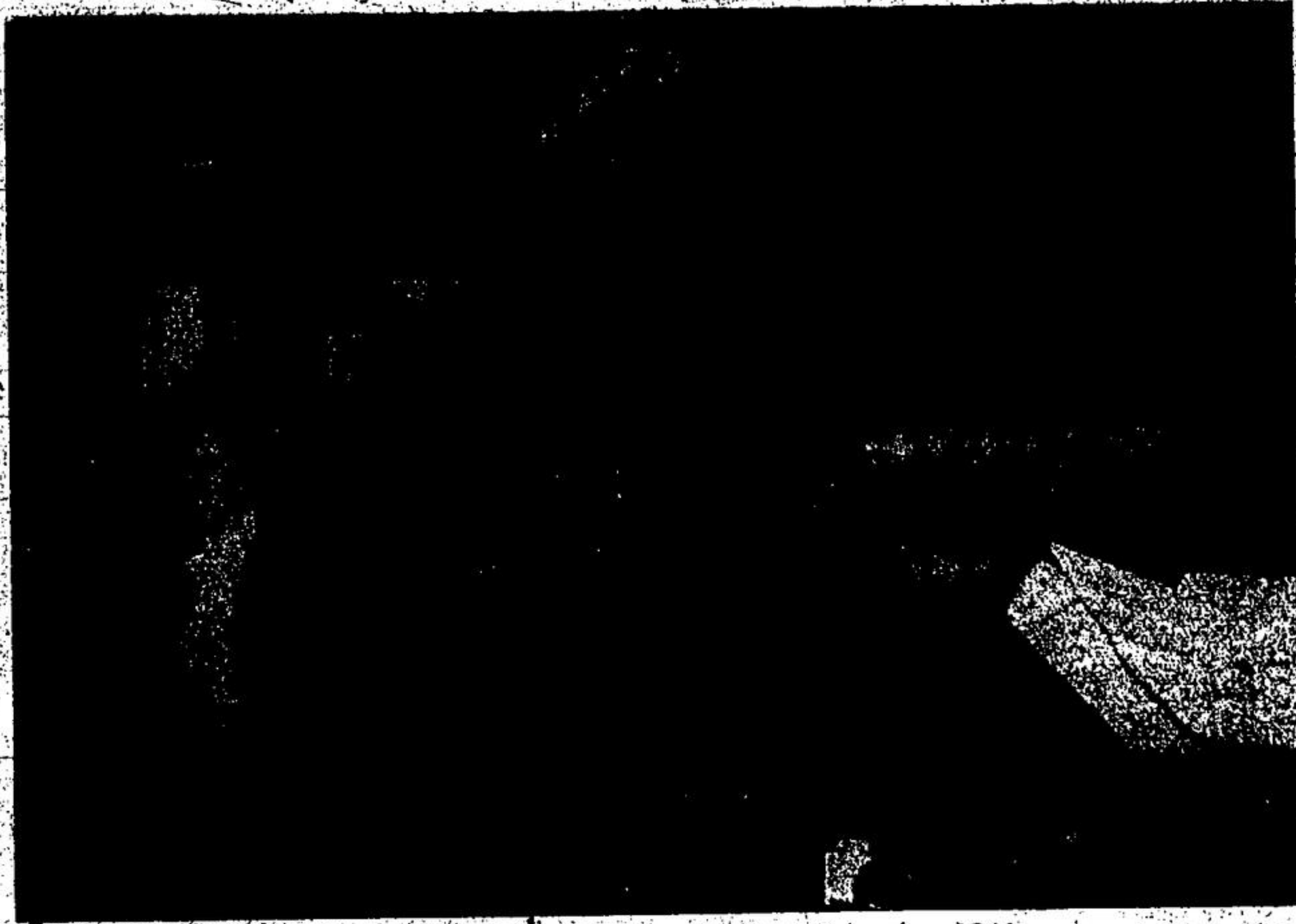
Up until 1917 the Free Press was all set by hand, with each letter being individually assembled. A good compositor could set from two to three columns per day of 10 hours by sticking close to his case. The Free Press was one of the first newspapers in Halton County to install a linotype on which an operator will set a column of newspaper type an hour. At present there are two linotypes setting the type for the publishing firm.

The history of the Free Press is entwined with the history of the community. It has supported mea-

sure aimed at its progress and ties of this community. Joseph Hacking in 1875 wrote that Acton had just barely enough inhabitants to become incorporated, but he had faith in the outlook for nearly a century of the active development of Acton. Eighty-four years and four editors later, Acton has become a town and justified the faith in his establishment of the Free Press.



Editors of the Free Press have been J. H. Hacking (top right); S. W. Galbraith (top left); Right Rev. Dr. T. Albert Moore (lower left); H. P. Moore (lower right) and G. A. Dills (centre) since 1927.



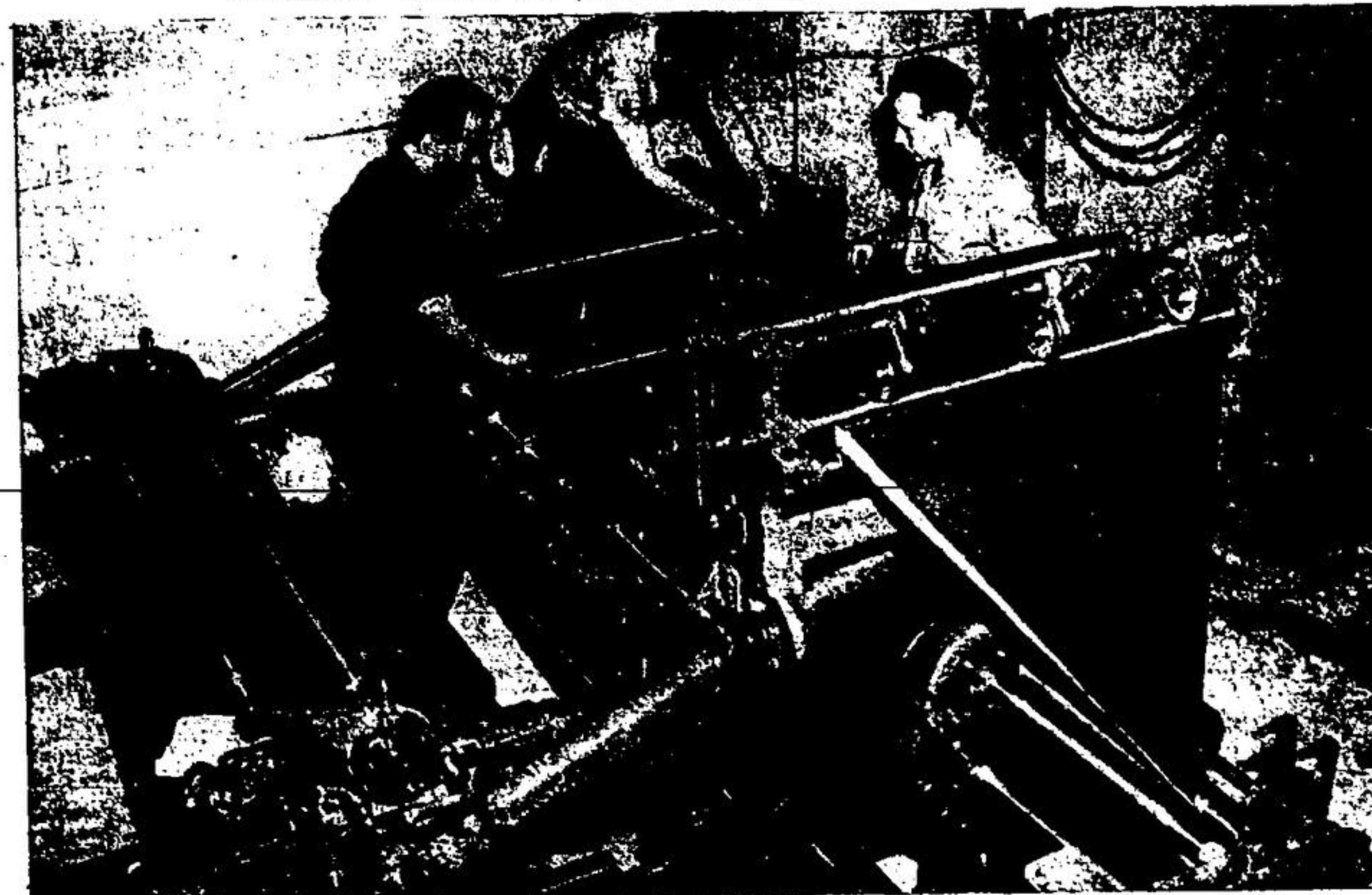
Interior view of the Free Press Plant in December 1946.



G. A. Dills turns first sod on addition in 1949. Electronic platemaking is introduced in June 1956.



An exterior view of the present building showing the two additions.



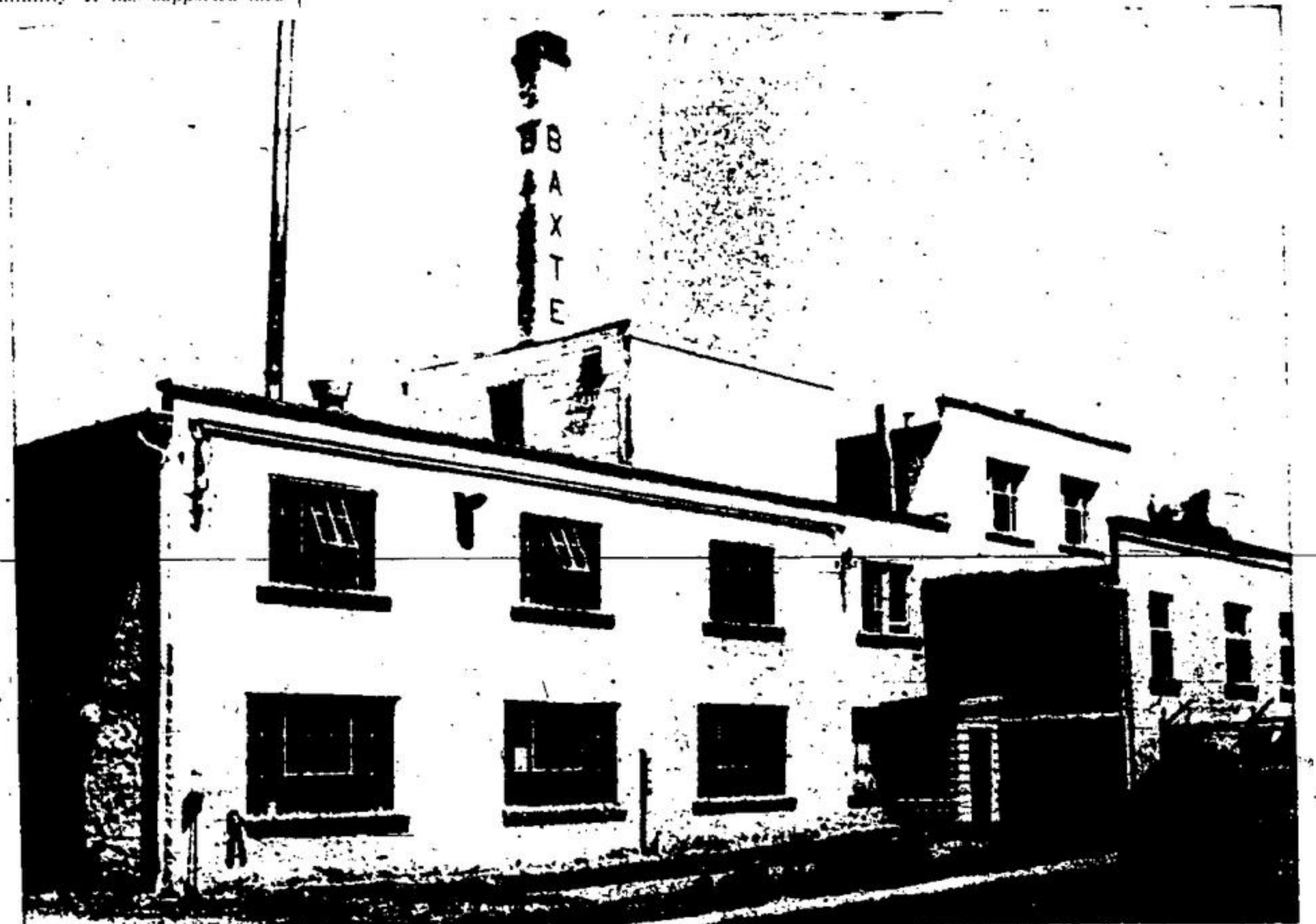
Installation of the roll fed Goss press was completed in September 1957.



Formerly the Mason Knitting Co. building, the Baxter plant has since been enlarged. This view was in 1940.



Levelling Corporation Pond was necessary to provide room for the expansion of the Baxter building.



A present day view of the Baxter Building is shown here as the publishing firm takes over.