

NEWSPAPERS OF ONTARIO

Early History of The Chronicle As Written by E. K. Evans, Esq., That Will be of Interest to Our Older Readers, and Also Have a Certain Fascination For Those of the Younger Generation.—A Story of Early Days in Durham.

During the early Spring months The St. Marys Journal-Argus carried a series of articles on "Newspapers of Ontario," being a brief survey of the early start and subsequent progress of many of the Ontario journals of to-day that have grown up with the country and in many instances have had no small share in the prosperity of this young country during the past sixty years.

The article on The Chronicle, which was Sketch No. 5 of the series, was written by Mr. E. K. Evans, the son of a former schoolteacher here, and whose younger days were spent in Durham. Mr. Evans is now we understand, a resident of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and, a couple of years ago, was an interested visitor to our office. The article says:

The Chronicle was a four-page paper, seven columns to a page, using "patent outsides." That is, the outside pages were printed in either outside pages were printed in Hamilton or Toronto (there were two houses furnishing ready prints)—one in each of these cities. The inside pages were devoted to editorials, local news and advertising. It was established in 1862 by White & Johnston. I believed they continued in partnership for six or eight years, when the senior partner severed his relations with the publication and left town. Where he went I do not know. In fact, I have no recollection of having ever seen him and I do not remember of him having ever again any connection with any newspaper in Ontario. John A. Johnston continued with the paper for a time and it was with him I first began to learn the art of printing. He was a tall man, very handsome in appearance. His hair was almost yellow and beautifully curly. His beard was of slightly different shade, very fine. It is probable that a razor had never touched his face. I think of him now as a man of considerable ability. He was more than once elected to the village council. He, however, did not edit his own paper. The Hon. George Jackson edited it at that time. I do not know whether Mr. Jackson was a member of the Dominion or Provincial Parliament, but I think the former. He was a man with a very aristocratic bearing apparently wealthy. He had the finest residence in Durham and his grounds occupied a whole block which he, unfortunately for the public, kept enclosed behind a high, black board fence. People used to peer through the gates and the cracks of the fence to get a glimpse of the beautiful grounds. He grew the choicest of flowers and the finest fruits ever grown in Grey County. The writer of this sketch was privileged to see its beauty every week when he, as the printer's devil, took the proof of the editorials to Mr. Jackson to read before they were printed. I thought Mr. Jackson was a very kindly gentleman, for he never failed to reward me with some choice fruit, and frequently gave me some advice which it would be well had I heeded.

I think now that Mr. Johnston could have written his own editorials, though it is likely that Mr. Jackson was in a position to give them deeper thought. Mr. Johnston, of course, wrote the local news. There was not much of this, however, for it was before the days when newspaper men discovered that many little trivial things of a community if printed became very interesting news to the average reader. The advertising patronage of The Chronicle was quite good for those days, but I think it really was not

anything more than patronage—its value was not comprehended. Ads. were seldom changed, and the paper had almost exactly the same appearance from week to week. The reports of the doings of the Councils of the surrounding townships were very faithfully and lengthily published. The proceedings of both Houses of Parliament were so extensively given, and the yea and nay vote given so often that I could set the type for them without looking at the copy, for they seemed to be divided on strictly party lines. To this day I can repeat much of it. It was: Yeas—Baker, Barr, Baxter, Brown, etc., to the end of the alphabet. All other local papers were run along that line during the seventies.

However, I believe The Chronicle, with about 800 subscribers, and a quite good job trade, was making some better than a good living for its publisher. He owned the building which had been built for a printing office. He also owned a neat and commodious home and apparently had plenty of everything to make life happy for himself and small family.

In the early seventies a paper was started in either Markdale or Maxwell (I do not now remember which place). In 1878 this printing plant was moved to Durham and The Grey Review was started in opposition to The Chronicle, with almost fatal result to the latter publication. The publisher of The Review had been a school teacher. His name was B. H. Townsend. He was running it in 1890 when I visited the old town and continued with it, I believe, for some years after. I do not know if The Review is still alive, but I think it ought to merge with The Chronicle if it has not done so already, for Durham is not likely to ever be able to support two good papers. John A. Johnston did not remain long with The Chronicle after The Review was established. I believe he went to Toronto and secured a situation as a typesetter.

When Johnston retired from The Chronicle it was taken up by a school teacher who had taught in the schools in the country around Durham. He was indeed a character who attracted attention wherever he was. His pen dripped with vinegar and gall. Woe to the man—or woman either—who came under his displeasure. If ever people got a nuckracking, the people around

Durham got it from this man. A. H. N. Jenkins, and if there was no muck to rake he could find something that would smell just as badly. He had a remarkable command of the English language with a decided English accent. Nobody knew anything of his past. He had an aristocratic bearing that suggested that he came from some family of standing in England. In spite of the ill feeling he engendered in the community and the general dislike the people had for him, he put The Chronicle on the map and greatly increased its circulation, not because they liked the paper, but because they dare not let an issue go by without reading it. He eventually left Durham and went to Brussels, Ont. There he published The Brussels Review (though I am not quite sure that name is right). His pen was still dripping with blood and in due time the Brussels people in some way got rid of him. Twenty-six years ago was working in a printing office here (Grand Rapids, Mich.) when I walked this same A. H. N. Jenkins. I knew him, but he did not know me, because I was a small boy when he had last seen me. I introduced myself and explained that I was a son of G. T. Evans, at one time principal of Durham schools. "Deuced fine fellow!" said Jenkins. Then I learned he was publishing a weekly here named The Times. He was doing his level best to stir things up here as he had done in Durham and Brussels, but the city was too big for him to make himself very well known in. He flayed a judge one time. The judge called him into court on a charge of "contempt of court." At his trial he told the judge that he thought it all "a jolly good joke," but the judge told him it was a very serious matter and sent him to jail to think it over. He remained there thinking it over for several weeks and then in his paper he printed an ample apology and was set free. He learned nothing by that experience. He died about fifteen years ago. In conversation with him some years before he died he as good as told me he was the illegitimate son of an English nobleman and that perhaps explains his aristocratic style and the fact that nobody around Durham knew anything of who he was.

Later The Chronicle was taken over by W. J. Mitchell who made it for a few years I think the best weekly I ever knew. He succeeded in rounding up one of the best groups of country correspondents

that ever supplied news for a country weekly. When he left, I do not know.

In 1918 I spent a day in Durham just to see what the old place looked like. Naturally, I soon headed for The Chronicle office. Forgetting that an absence of 43 years might have made some change. I was on my way to the building where it had been housed in my boyhood days, but before I got that far I saw the sign "Durham Chronicle." I went in. It was presided over by an old school teacher. It had been keeping up with the times, having now a

modern linotype and a cylinder press. He also was publishing a good newspaper.

Glenroadin.
(Our own correspondent.)
Miss Olive Dunsmoor of town is spending a happy vacation with her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Vaughan, at Glenroadin.

Mr. Ireland is making his home with Mrs. Dan. McKechnie.

Mr. Gillen Boyd had an exciting runaway when his horses escaped the gate, upsetting a large load of hay. His grandson, Johnnie, was thrown clear of the load when the wagon was damaged and consequently suffered no injury.

We were all surprised to see Mr. Roy Thompson last week. He was

around visiting his old chums and acquaintances.

Mrs. Large and son from Brampton, also Mrs. Banks of Riverview, and Mr. and Mrs. A. Middleton of Durham, made a brief call on Mrs. Banks this week.

Mr. Dougald McDonald, the sawyer at Glenroadin Mill, had a very narrow escape from being badly injured when he slipped, just escaping the saw. He was found unconscious but fortunately no injury was done.

The dry, hot weather is still continuing here and everything certainly shows the result of the lack of rain. The farmers have commenced to gather in their grain which is this year none too plentiful.

The Chronicle Job Plant.

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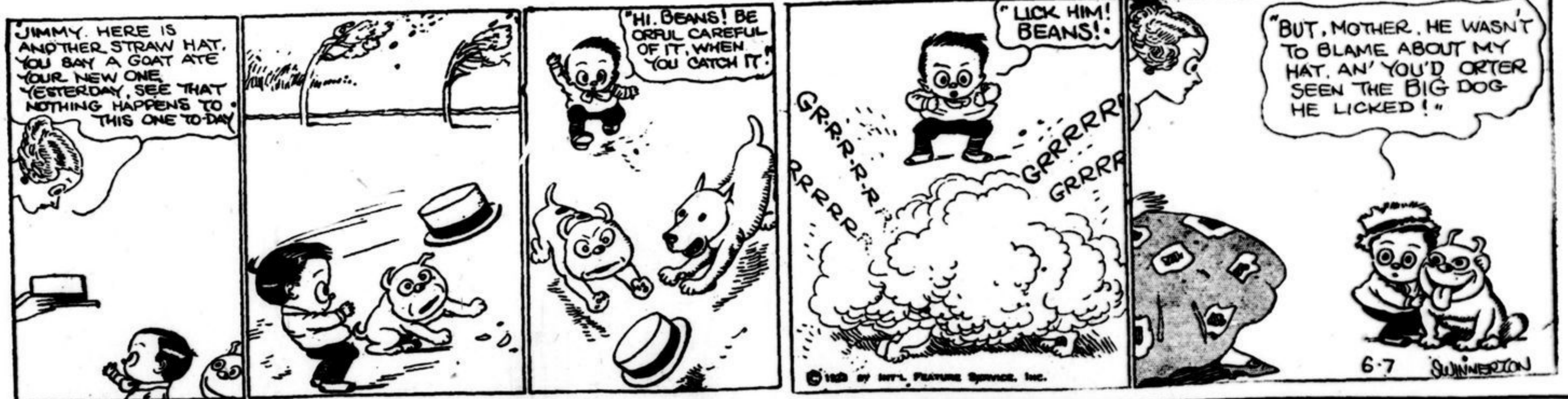
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