

Chillicothe Times-Bulletin

Est. 1883

Before electric lights and pavement in Chillicothe, the *Chillicothe Bulletin* began. Chester Arthur was the 21st president, and locally, R.B. Beebe presided over the Chillicothe City Council. On July 4, 1883, 22-year-old Frank W. Bailey founded the monthly newspaper, now celebrating its 127th anniversary. The humble beginnings pointed more toward showing his appreciation for his printing business customers. Bailey reportedly had one of the best poster printing houses in the state at one time, and did work for the Frisco and C.R.I.P. railroads, Ringling Bros. mammoth circus and all the Peoria theaters. He had four years of the printing business under his belt when he began the newspaper. "In presenting this number of the *Bulletin* to the public, we have no expectation of immediate gain; as it is gotten up entirely at our own expense: but rather as a mark of our appreciation, of the many favors we have received, at the hands of those whose business we herein advertise," wrote Bailey. "We have lately purchased a Prouty Job press, have made large additions to our stock of type and are prepared to do all kinds of card, plain and fancy printing on the shortest notice, and in style and price, unsurpassed by any job office. "Again thanking our numerous friends for the very liberal patronage they have been pleased to bestow upon us, we commend this number of the *Bulletin* to your favorable notice." The newspaper was four pages, with three columns of text on each page, almost 8 by 11 inches. About one-third of the front page was devoted to advertising. In January 1884, it became a semi-monthly, and in August of the same year, a weekly. Bailey installed a new press that year, which meant no paper was available between Aug. 4 and Aug. 29 while the press was set up. With the weekly Friday edition also came a change in paper size. More inches were available for news and advertising, as the paper increased in size to 16 1/2 by 21 inches. Bailey also added a business partner, Frank B. Whipple. The *Bulletin* changed from a three-column newspaper to six columns, and a subscription increased from 50 cents to \$1 per year. The office was located above J.W. McCully's grocery store, one door north of the post office at the time. Whipple did not stay long, though, and Bailey bought him out of the business on Nov. 7, 1884, citing the newspaper was not enough income for two men. For about two months, beginning July 6, 1896, the paper was circulated daily. With no explanation, it returned to a weekly. Bailey met adversity with his fellow businessmen during the Halloween fire of 1890, which burnt many downtown businesses to the ground. Bailey began his story about the fire as follows: "The night of Oct. 31 and the morning of Nov. 1 will be long remembered by the citizens of Chillicothe, and the strangers who were 'within her gates' at that time. A conflagration paralleled only by the great Chicago fire, considering the proportionate size of the two cities, has swept the major portion of the business part of our city from the face of the earth, and what was once a thriving, busy and prosperous locality, on Saturday morning lay a mass of debris, rubbish and ashes." Mayor A.N. Keith and the council were discussing a waterworks system, to the tune of \$30,000, but no decision had been made. Bailey alone showed a loss of \$6,000, with insurance of \$1,050. The entire *Bulletin* plant was destroyed, but Bailey moved the business

into a barn behind his home at 1123 N. Fifth St. A neighboring publisher offered the use of his facilities in order for Bailey to print the *Bulletin* on time, without missing an edition. The business district began rebuilding, this time with brick and stone buildings, and so did the *Bulletin*. "Well, here we are! It is true the *Bulletin* of to-day is not quite as pretty a paper as the *Bulletin* of last week. As our friend the Transcript remarked, we were bound not to disappoint our readers if we set the matter from the 'Hell box' and printed it with shoe blacking ... "Without egotism we say that last week we had the most completely equipped printing office in the county outside of Peoria, to-day our business office, news and job room, as well as our editorial rooms, are located in our barn, and with little better than the hell box in the way of type, we print this issue on our new job press. But things will not remain long in this condition. What has been done can be done again, and though we virtually lost our all, we are in far better condition than when we printed the first edition of the *Bulletin* in 1883, for we have that invaluable adjunct to any business — experience and a reputation ..." Bailey continued on as proprietor and publisher for a total of 35 years until his death in 1918. In the early days of the *Bulletin*, it was not uncommon to find obituaries on the front page, or lots of national and state news mixed with Chillicothe area news. The newspaper also featured correspondents reporting the "chicken dinner news" from Dunlap, Lawn Ridge, North Hampton, Rome and West Hallock. His son, Randolph, took over the family business, and changed from handsetting the press to a typesetting machine. He and his mother sold the business to G.P. Scott Nov. 1, 1920. In 1927, Scott bought out the *Enquirer*, which began in 1894. It was the last of the string of newspapers begun in Chillicothe. The first, named the Sun, began in 1854. Multiple other newspapers began, changed names and ownership, but none had the staying power of the *Bulletin*. Under Scott's leadership, the *Bulletin* increased in page count from four to eight pages to 10 to 16 pages. He also increased the columns from six to seven. Scott guided the *Bulletin* through the hard years, including operating it part-time "to keep our heads above water and meet obligations in spite of depression," the publisher wrote in the 50th anniversary paper in 1933. A subscription then cost \$2. He published the newspaper for 31 years, selling it then to W.W. Sanders May 1, 1951. His son, Tom Sanders, also followed in the newspaper business. In 1982, John Winsor bought the *Chillicothe Bulletin*, and formed Tazewell Publishing Co. with the *Peoria Observer*, *East Peoria Courier*, *Morton News*, *Washington Reporter* and various advertisers. In 1994, Ted Fleming of Peoria purchased the company, and changed the company's name to Fleming Publishing. In October 1997, Jim Glassman, who owned local radio stations, changed the company names to TimesNewspapers, and added the word "Times" to the newspapers' titles, thus making the *Chillicothe Times-Bulletin*. During that time, the *Chillicothe Times-Bulletin* transitioned again to a fully computerized pagination. Though the paper has won numerous Illinois Press Association awards throughout its years, it racked up 15 awards during 2001 and 2002, making it a runner-up for the Verle V. Kramer Memorial Trophy in Division A, a division for newspapers under 3,000 circulation. Additionally, the newspaper won the coveted General Excellence award in 2001, declaring it the best newspaper in the state in its division. Ten years later, Glassman sold the newspapers to GateHouse Media, a publicly traded company,

based out of New York. Linda Smith-Brown is publisher and Jeanette Kendall is executive editor of TimesNewspapers. *Chillicothe Times-Bulletin* editor Marianne Gillespie has worked at the newspaper for more than 11 years. Chelsea Peck is in her first year as associate editor and Justin Miller is the sports reporter. After more than a century in existence, the most-recent change is the addition of a website: www.chillicothebulletin.com. And, though many changes have occurred throughout the last 127 years, one thing remains the same — the *Chillicothe Times-Bulletin* continues to chronicle the news of Chillicothe.