

Fort Wayne News-Sentinel

Founded: 1833 (*Fort Wayne Sentinel*); 1874 (*Fort Wayne Daily News*); 1918 (*Fort Wayne News and Sentinel*).

Location:

Fort Wayne Sentinel: Old Masonic Hall on Columbia Street (West Columbia Street opposite Wayne Hotel) (1833–); Clinton and Columbia Streets; [Phoenix block ?]; Calhoun and Pearl Streets (–1865); Main and Calhoun Streets (1865–67); Calhoun and Pearl Streets (1868–); Calhoun and Wayne Streets; Calhoun Street between Wayne Street and Washington Boulevard (–1875); 107 Calhoun Street (1875–); 114 West Wayne Street (1903–18)

Fort Wayne News: Calhoun and Main Streets (1874–); Washington Boulevard and Clinton Street (–1902); 913–915 Calhoun Street (1903–9); 202–204 East Main Street (1909–18)

Fort Wayne News-Sentinel: 202–204 East Main Street (1918–ca.1925); South Barr Street and East Washington Boulevard (ca.1925–58); 600 West Main Street (1958–)

In January 1833 the citizens of Fort Wayne invited S. V. B. Noel, son of a local pioneer, and Thomas Tigar, an English immigrant printer, both living in Indianapolis, to establish a newspaper in their city. Community leaders offered to loan \$500 for the purchase of a press. Noel and Tigar declined this loan but accepted the commission. They acquired a secondhand press in Indianapolis, managed to bring it over muddy roads and swollen streams to Fort Wayne, and on 6 July 1833 began weekly publication of the *Fort Wayne Sentinel*. The population of the city at that time totaled about three hundred. Since Tigar was a Democrat and Noel a Whig, the paper was initially independent. When Noel left a few months after its founding, however, Tigar made the paper Democratic. Tigar sold the paper after four years to George W. Wood, another pioneer Fort Wayne newspaperman. Wood, in turn, sold the paper in 1840 to I. D. G. Nelson and shortly thereafter established the *Fort Wayne Times*. Tigar purchased the paper back in 1841 and owned it until his retirement in 1865.

The pioneer paper was chronically underfunded. Early *Sentinel* editorials were often appeals for money from delinquent subscribers. Nelson, upon ending his short-lived tenure as owner of the paper, complained bitterly of the lack of support for the *Sentinel*. The paper was originally published from the old Masonic Hall on the north side of Columbia Street but moved frequently to various locations in the heart of the city. Tigar began publishing a daily edition in 1861. Beginning with Tigar's retirement in 1865, the paper saw several changes in ownership. Tigar sold it to I. W. Campbell and W. Henry Dills, who merged it with the *Fort Wayne Times* and published the joint paper as the *Fort Wayne Times and Sentinel*. New ownership the following year changed the paper's name to the *Democrat*, which it was published as until the name *Sentinel* was restored in 1873. The paper sold for \$50,000 in 1874 to a group of investors who enlarged its facilities; the following year it moved to a new building at 107 Calhoun Street. By 1880 the *Fort Wayne Sentinel* had a circulation of about 4,500, the largest daily circulation in the state, and employed sixty-three people. Edward A. K. Hackett, a native of Pennsylvania who arrived in Indiana in the 1870s, purchased the paper in 1880 and controlled it until his death in 1916.

William D. Page and Charles E. Taylor established the *Fort Wayne Daily News* in June 1874. Page and Taylor initially printed their Republican paper in a small format, leading their competitors to dismiss the *News* as a handbill. The small paper was well edited, however, and built a circulation of 1,600 within a month. Taylor sold his interest in the paper to Page in 1877. Page, son of a Presbyterian home missionary who was acquainted with many of the leading abolitionists, learned the printing trade at a young

age and came to Fort Wayne in 1871 to work on the *Fort Wayne Gazette*. He maintained control of the *News* until 1902.

Clarence F. Bicknell, born near Freelandville in Knox County, headed a group of investors who purchased the paper in 1902 and formed the News Publishing Company. Between 1908 and 1909 the paper moved from offices on Calhoun Street to 202–204 East Main Street. In 1918 the *News* and *Sentinel* merged. Two years later, upon Bicknell's death, Oscar G. Foellinger purchased the combined newspaper. Foellinger, the son of a shoe manufacturer, had worked for six years as business manager for the *Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette* and spent two years as an accountant on the West Coast. Beginning in 1912 he worked at the News Publishing Company and assisted with the consolidation of the *News and Sentinel* in 1918. He rose to the position of president and general manager before purchasing the paper. Foellinger was active in Republican politics. In 1925 the title of the paper was shortened to the *News-Sentinel*. Around that time the paper moved to the corner of South Barr Street and East Washington Boulevard.

Before leaving on a hunting trip to Canada in October 1936, Oscar Foellinger told his daughter Helene, somewhat facetiously, "Keep an eye on things while I'm gone." On the trip he died suddenly of a heart attack, and responsibility for keeping an eye on his paper did indeed fall to his twenty-five-year-old daughter, who assumed the role of publisher. Helene Foellinger started working at the paper after college. She had convinced her father to establish a woman's page and had served as the *News-Sentinel's* women's editor since 1932. Under Helene the paper prospered, increasing its circulation by 30 percent in five years to 67,800. The paper maintained a conservative Republican

outlook; it vigorously opposed American entrance into World War II. Helene, however, primarily focused on the business side of the operation.

In 1950 the *News-Sentinel* established a joint operating agency with its morning rival, the *Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette*. The operating agency, Fort Wayne Newspapers, Inc., allowed both newspaper proprietors to reduce publishing costs without giving up ownership or control of their respective dailies. After establishing the organization, Helene Foellinger became president of Fort Wayne Newspapers, Inc., which managed the advertising, circulation, production, and related business functions of the two newspapers. Despite her belief in fostering locally owned Fort Wayne businesses, Helene, who remained unmarried and had no heirs, sold the *News-Sentinel* to Knight-Ridder Newspapers in 1980 for approximately \$37 million. Knight-Ridder also purchased 55 percent of the joint operating agency.

Over the years the paper has received numerous awards including a 1982 Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of Fort Wayne's flood. In 1999 the afternoon daily had more than 45,000 subscribers. Scott McGehee held the post of publisher and Joseph A. Weiler was the executive editor. McGehee was also the president and chief executive officer of Fort Wayne Newspapers, Inc. The *News-Sentinel* remained a member of the San Jose-based Knight-Ridder corporation, the second largest newspaper publishing group in the United States.