

Frankfort Times

Founded: 1877

Location: Colfax (1877–81); Epstein Store Building, Frankfort (1881–83); Cohee Building, southwest corner of the square (1883–84); Kelly Building, West Clinton Street (1884–1904); Times Building, 209–211 East Clinton Street (1904–1975); 251 East Clinton Street (1975–)

The *Frankfort Times* was originally established in 1877 in Colfax, Indiana, as the *Chronicle* by B. B. Clark and a Mr. Jarrell. The partners published a five-column quarto. The paper changed hands several times before Gilbert H. Hamilton purchased the journal in 1881. Hamilton spent four years teaching school before taking on the responsibilities of printing a newspaper at the age of twenty-one. He and partners George Y. and Finley Fowler moved the weekly to Frankfort and changed its name to the *Times*. The partners also operated a job-printing department.

George Fowler was a native of Clinton County who had been orphaned at the age of twelve. After spending two years on a farm in Perry County he came back to Frankfort and became an apprentice at the *Crescent*, a Democratic party paper. He rose from journeyman to business manager and later to a journalist before he turned twenty-six. In 1885 he resigned from the *Crescent* and established the *Frankfort Times* with Hamilton and his brother Finley.

The new weekly was an eight-page, six-column, newspaper. The weekly was printed in the offices of the *Crescent* for its first few years of existence. Within two years the paper became a seven-column quarto and the owners purchased a Prouty press, one of the cheapest presses available on the market at the time. A year's subscription cost only \$1.25 in 1888. Each eight-page issue contained sermon notes and news from around the world as well as a page devoted to reports from other towns within the county. Some of

the information included in the town reports told of students suspended from school, a visiting relative from outside of Clinton County, or upcoming social activities.

Circulation continued to grow, and by 1890 the partners had purchased a Potter drum cylinder press, one of the most popular flatbed presses of the era.

In 1894 the politically independent weekly launched a morning daily after George Fowler became the sole owner. The daily began as a seven-column folio and was enlarged to an eight-column folio after a few months. By the end of the year the daily had a subscription list of 1,200 people, a little less than half of the weekly's list. The Linotype became popular near the turn of the century, and George purchased one for his newspaper, the Miehle Press—the fastest flatbed press on the market in 1900.

In 1907 George suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and his son, G. Max Fowler, a sophomore in high school, took over the management of the paper. Max directed the purchase of a Webb perfecting press in 1912, in step with his father's tradition of buying some of the latest machinery. After the George died in 1914 his sons, Max, Raymond, and Walter, created G. Y. Fowler Sons, Incorporated as a management corporation. Max continued to edit the paper. Under Max's direction the paper drifted toward the Republican party. Max became the sole proprietor upon his brothers' deaths in the 1930s. Max continued to direct the daily until his passing in 1960.

By the mid-1920s the *Times* included more regularized columns, including one or two pages of material concerning America's growing obsession with sports. Each issue contained from ten to sixteen pages and included a society page and reports on the latest films as well as the usual mixture of local and national news. In the 1950s each issue of the *Times* averaged twelve to sixteen pages in length and measured nine columns wide.

International and national news and local happenings continued to greet readers on the front page every morning. Every Wednesday a “Farm News” section ran on the second page, and on Mondays the “Home News” reported on the latest floor plans, labor-saving gadgets, and homes for sale in the area. Opinions were only displayed two or three times a week, but pages with sports and social events were printed daily.

By the mid-1960s reports from Vietnam would grab the daily headlines while “Dear Abby” offered advice on the same page as the comics. The size of the paper continued to grow. In 1967 an issue of eighteen or twenty pages was not unusual, and each issue cost a dime.

Tom Heth, Max’s son-in-law, took over the journal, selling it nine years later to Nixon Newspapers, Incorporated. Joe Nixon, Sr., became the paper’s editor and the paper’s political affiliation switched to the Democratic party. In 1971 the *Times* converted to an evening paper, and four years later John R. Nixon was named president of the corporation. In the same year a major fire gutted the building. A new building was completed in 1978 on the same site as the old structure.

By the mid-1970s the paper under John Nixon ran from twelve to twenty pages and was published every day except Sunday. A mixture of international, national, and local news could still be found on the front page, and editorials ran daily. By 1986 the paper had become more regular in its organization of national and state news. The “Local Record” page listed upcoming events in the area, while the family section shared news of impending marriages, births, and anniversaries with the community. Each Saturday a church guide and news section appeared in the weekend edition of the *Times*.

In the 1990s the paper continued to run from twelve to twenty pages and remained committed to reporting on the events and news of the Clinton County area.

In 1980 a holding company, Nixon Enterprises Incorporated, was formed to manage the Nixon chain. John E. Mitchell was named to the position of publisher of the *Times*, a post he held until 1987. Mark Ingels became the publisher a year later. Ingles, a native of Richmond, graduated from Ball State University. After the mid-1980s the paper reverted to a politically independent publication. In 1993 the parent-corporation formed a new venture to publish newsletters. The company was forced to raise the price of its papers due to a national trend in declining advertising revenue and to the increasing global use of paper products and its attending rise in the price of paper.

Gregory S. Nixon was named president and chief executive officer of Nixon Newspapers in 1997. Gregory expanded the company's presence on the Internet. Citing declining interest in the business among the younger stockholders, Gregory announced in February 1998 that Nixon Newspapers would sell its operations to the Paxton Media Group of Paducah, Kentucky. Paxton is a fourth-generation, family owned business that publishes twenty-four newspapers in seven southern states, Illinois, and Indiana. Ingles continued as publisher in 1998.