

Hartford City News-Times, Incorporated

Founded: 1885

Location: 210 West Main Street (1885–95); 215 West Washington Street (1895–); 213 North Jefferson Street (–1973); 123 South Jefferson Street (1973–)

Most newspapers have a tangled history of varying ownership with many branches containing names no longer remembered and deep roots that stretch into the nineteenth century. The *Hartford City News-Times* can be counted as one of those newspapers. The *News-Times* began in 1885 as the *Times*. After the *Times* merged with the *Republican* and the *Blackford County Gazette* it became the *Times-Gazette*. In 1937, after combining with the *News*, the paper received its present name. Ownership of the *News-Times* has varied more than its moniker over the last century. In 1998 the *Hartford City News-Times* was one of several newspapers owned by Whitewater Valley Publishing, a subsidiary of Thomson International of Toronto, Canada. Thomson purchased the *News-Times* and three other local journals from the Hollinger Publishing Company in 1996. Hollinger had acquired the paper from the American Publishing Company in 1986. The last local owner was the Monfort family, who sold the daily to the American Publishing Company in 1977. The *News-Times* employed nine and expected more than \$500,000 in revenue in fiscal year 1998. Judi Harris oversaw publication while Beth Jones served as editor.

Hartford City Times. Elwood Huffman and Frank Geisler, two young, yet experienced newspapermen, formed a partnership and founded the *Times*. The first edition hit the streets on 10 December 1885. Huffman was a Hartford City native and had worked on other city papers including the *Courier* and the *Telegram*. Geisler, only twenty-two years old at the time, was the child of German immigrants. He had worked on a number of papers throughout the Midwest before coming to Hartford City, including a stint with the *Chicago Telegram*. The *Times*

embraced the Republican party. The partners later began publishing a *Daily Times* as well as the weekly.

Enoch D. Moffett, a local attorney and the Republican-appointed postmaster, acquired the company in 1888. Moffett had purchased or established various newspapers throughout Indiana, including the *Montpelier Herald* and the *Decatur Journal*. He sold the newspaper eight years later to Archie W. Tracy, who discontinued the weekly edition. The twenty-four-year-old Tracy had more than five years experience as an editor and reporter when he purchased the Hartford daily. In 1896 Tracy bought the *Republican*, combining its circulation with that of the more established *Times*. He moved the operation into the new Campbell and Ervin Building located on the southwest corner of Washington and High Streets and upgraded the printing press before selling the daily to Henry Geisler and Rolland Hubbard in 1902. Working to increase circulation and influence, Geisler and Hubbard merged the *Times* with the *Blackford County Gazette* in March 1905, creating the *News-Gazette*, a name retained until 1937.

Hartford City Republican. Frank and Henry Geisler bought the *Arena* in 1895 from William Noonan, a former schoolteacher turned farmer. The four-year-old weekly had been associated with the Socialist party and Populist causes before the Geisler brothers turned it into a Republican party organ. Henry was nine years younger than Frank and a Hartford City native. The *Republican* printed weekly and daily editions. In 1886 the brothers sold the paper to Archie W. Tracy, who combined the *Republican* with the *Times*.

Blackford County Gazette. Henry Geisler and Rolland Hubbard collaborated to publish a Republican weekly beginning 3 August 1901. The paper had a column written in French for the benefit of the Belgian and French glassmakers working in the city. By 18 November 1901 the

partners also began publishing the *Daily Gazette*. Both papers were merged with the *Times* in 1905.

Hartford City Times-Gazette. After consolidating their two newspapers, the *Times* and the *Blackford County Gazette*, Hubbard and Geisler hired Ralph Monfort as editor of the paper. Monfort became a partner after Hubbard departed in 1911, assuming sole proprietorship after the death of Geisler in 1914. Herbert E. Honey joined Monfort in 1919. In 1937 Honey and Monfort purchased the *News*, merging it with their operation and designating the combined paper the *News-Times*.

Hartford City News. Edward E. Cox founded the *News* as a politically independent tabloid in 1892. Within eight years, however, Cox could not hide his true political roots, and the paper became associated with the Democratic party. His party loyalty was rewarded in 1914 when President Woodrow Wilson appointed him the city's postmaster. Cox attended Purdue University and taught school in Miami County before turning to journalism in 1890. He purchased the *Hartford City Telegram* in 1891, merging it with the *News* in 1892. He sold the weekly to Herbert E. Honey and James Chapman in 1915. Three years later Cox reassumed control but sold the *News* back to Chapman around 1924, only to have Chapman relinquish control of the paper to Cox within the year. By 1930 Cox had built a company that, besides printing a newspaper, employed seventy-five people and shipped food labels and wrapping all over the world. On 15 February 1937 Cox sold the *News* to Monfort and Honey, owners of the *Times-Gazette*, creating the *News-Times*.

Hartford City News-Times. Monfort and Honey continued to run the paper until Honey's death in 1944. John W. Monfort joined his father in operating the newspaper after World War II. The daily became politically independent after Democratic competitors withered and the *News-*

Times became the only newspaper in Hartford City. Ralph Monfort died in 1964, and John continued to run the business, moving the company south on Jefferson Street and replacing the Linotype machines with offset presses. The Monfort family sold the daily to the American Publishing Company in 1977, but John remained as publisher through 1980.