

*Hobart Gazette*

Founded: 1889

Location: Original and subsequent locations to 1934 unknown, Hobart (1889–1934); 230 Main Street (1934); 607 East Third Street (1945, 1978); 413 Main Street (1981–June 1998); 555 East Fourth Street (June 1998–).

George Nearpass and G. Bender launched the *Hobart Gazette* 28 August 1889 as a paper “thoroughly Independent on all matters of public concern.” The first issues were loaded with “local drifts,” short notices about local happenings, visitors from out of town, and news of upcoming events. Advice, artwork, serials, and jokes also joined other local items in the first issues of the paper. Even though it was the first paper in the city, Nearpass and Bender could not make the *Gazette* a profitable venture, so they sold it to Andrew J. Smith and P. J. Gristy in December 1889. About a year after the sale the new owners hired Nearpass to serve as the editor, a position he held until 1892.

Smith gave the paper stability and made it profitable, a rarity for community newspapers of the period. Smith was one of the few people who seemed to excel at anything he undertook. He was born in Michigan on the eve of the Civil War and raised on a farm in Elkhart County. From age seventeen until he graduated with a bachelor’s degree in mathematics from the Northern Indiana Normal School seven years later, Smith taught school and worked on a farm. He continued to teach until he accepted the post of principal of all Hobart schools in August 1886. He introduced several reforms including graded classes and a high school, at first a two-year course but later upgraded to three and then finally four years after the turn of the century. He left the classroom for the editor’s chair in December 1889, not leaving it until 1929.

Smith was firmly committed to his community and tried to boost the town whenever the chance arose. He was a charter member of the Hobart Commercial Club, the president of a local bank, and the secretary of a manufacturing concern. After he became the editor and publisher of the *Gazette* he used his editorial pen to push for internal improvements, such as gravel roads, sewer systems, and waterworks. To remind Hobart citizens of how far they had come, he began near the turn of the century a yearly review of Hobart economic and industrial progress. He was the sole proprietor of the weekly for more than two years after he purchased the interest of his partner, P. J. Gristy, in 1890.

Nehemiah B. "Nevin" White purchased an interest in the weekly in April 1892 and remained a partner with Smith until March 1929. White had been in the newspaper business in Washington, D.C., before moving to Hobart. White, a native of Fredonia, Ohio, was a Republican, while Smith was a "conservative" Democrat. The editorials mostly spoke of local concerns, and on most of those issues the partners agreed. The journal remained politically independent throughout the Smith-White partnership. White was as entrepreneurial as Smith, and the pair formed a general real-estate, loan, and insurance business that operated out of the offices of the *Gazette*.

The paper continued to progress. Photographs appeared prior to America's entry into World War I, and headlines became bolder in the 1920s. "Local drifts" continued to make page one, but readers found the most important state and national news within the paper. The format did not change much during the Smith-White era. The width changed from five columns in the 1880s to six after the turn of the century to seven by 1929, but each issue always ran eight pages in length.

After White and Smith sold the paper to Glen S. Easton it suffered from instability and financial woes. Easton turned the paper from an independent publication to a champion for the Democratic party. Easton owned the paper only until November 1929. The Merchants Publishing Company, headed by E. S. Pike and James E. Schofield, next wielded the pen for the *Gazette*, but it was also plagued by financial problems, becoming delinquent in its payments. The newspaper was finally sold to Oliver L. Pattee in a sheriff's sale in April 1933. In the mid-1930s advertisements and classifieds dominated the space in the paper, perhaps allowing it to make a profit.

Pike, Schofield, and others improved the look of the journal, even if they could not make it show a surplus. Advertisements disappeared from the front page in the 1930s, a sports page was created, and the big stories received top billing on page one. Some things did not change, however; serials depicting mystery and adventure stories continued to run. In the 1940s and 1950s engagement pictures began to appear, large cartoons ran on page one, and an editorial page could be found in the middle of the paper. By the mid-1950s the paper continued to print all types of stories on various pages, without any real attempt at systemization or an editorial page. News was still organized in the column format, not changing to the block format found in most American newspapers today until the 1970s.

Oliver Pattee, his son Paul, and Ray Irwin operated the paper for about two years before Paul Pattee assumed sole control of the enterprise in 1935. Paul changed the name of the publication to the *News-Gazette*, combining the *Hobart News* with the older paper. He sold the *News-Gazette* to Mrs. E. S. Pike and her son William in 1939. E. S. Pike and Schofield had launched the *Hobart Index* in 1932. Pike eventually gained complete

control of the *Index* in 1933 and combined it with the *Gary Commonwealth* in January 1934. After Pike's death in the late 1930s his widow and son inherited the *Index-Commonwealth*. When the Pikes bought the *News-Gazette* they combined the papers and kept the older name, the *Gazette*. The Pikes brought back some needed stability and profitability to the weekly and controlled the paper from January 1939 until William sold the enterprise to John T. Dudley in 1959.

Dudley held on to the paper for four years before selling it to W. E. Smick, who in turn sold it in 1968 to Henry E. Ratliffe. Ratliffe immediately disposed of the journal to Joanna R. Stafford in February 1968, and she sold it in the mid-1970s to Joel and Deana Remaley. The Remaleys brought several innovations to the journal. They switched to a block-style arrangement of stories; established a viewpoints page with editorials, letters to the editor, and commentary, usually found on pages four and five; and started the "Hobart Happenings" column, which printed items concerning news of local citizens and events.

The Remaleys formed the Herald News Group in 1983 after they bought the *Merrillville Herald*. Six years later they sold their small chain to Dallas-based Cordell Publications, Ltd.; Joel Remaley remained the editor for a short time after the sale. The new owner discontinued the job-printing department, a century-old business in its own right. By 1996 Cordell Publications was forced to discontinue the publication of the *Herald*, but continued to publish the *Gazette* and nine shopping guides. In May 1998 Cordell sold its interest in the papers to Great Lakes Publishing, Inc., a Portage-based company that also controls four other northern Indiana community newspapers. Great Lakes Publishing moved production of the paper to its main office in Portage in June

1998. The editorial pages were discontinued, except under special circumstances, and subscription prices were raised slightly. In 1998 Brenda Kleihege was president and Peter Costello was publisher for Great Lakes. Steve Euvino, the editor under the Cordell group, continued as editor for the *Gazette* in 1998.