

ABOUT THE MANCHESTER HERALD (1881-1991)

Webmaster's note: These newspaper articles tell the story of *The Manchester Herald*.

The first, "Herald Ceases Publication Today," appeared in the last edition of *The Manchester Herald*, June 28, 1991, and was reprinted in "Old Manchester II...The Storytellers," pages 192-193, compiled and edited by Milton Adams (1923-2011), who prefaced the reprint with, "That which follows is an obituary to cover the death of a dearly loved friend of Old Manchester and its people. In my assembly of this book, my single most valuable source of information was The Herald. The Herald's daily commitment to Manchester history and its 'daily doings' was most evident. After hundreds of hours reading the pages of The Herald, I can only say, 'Good-bye old friend, we will always miss you.' The Herald died at the age of 109."]

The second article follows the pictures below. Thanks to Maureen Hevey for both transcriptions.

HERALD'S RICH HISTORY RETOLD

Elwood Starr Ela, in partnership with Thomas Pratt of Rockville, founded the Manchester Saturday Evening Herald in 1881. While October 1st is regarded as The Herald's birthday, its first edition was published on December 17, 1881, and was distributed free.

The Ela-Pratt partnership lasted until 1885 when Mr. Ela became the sole owner of the weekly four-page paper. It later expanded to eight pages, and the Half-Weekly Herald was achieved in 1895 by splitting the paper and publishing it on Tuesday and Friday for Wednesday and Saturday distribution.

In 1888, Ela bought a four-page Cotterel Press and located his paper in the North End's Rose Building, somewhere north of the railroad tracks on Old North Main Street, before it was relocated during North End Redevelopment in 1965.

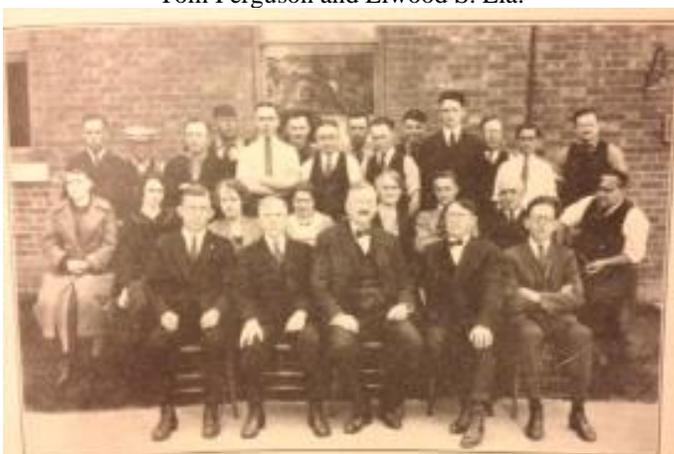
Article as it appeared in the 6/28/1991 Herald:



Article as it appears in "Old Manchester II...The Storytellers" book:



Front row, seated, second and third from left, Tom Ferguson and Elwood S. Ela.



In the early 1880s, this doughty group of twenty-seven people made the Manchester Herald an institution. Seated front, second and third from left, are Tom Ferguson and Elwood S. Ela.

Burned Out

Fire destroyed the Rose Building on Jan. 4, 1889, and Mr. Ela set up temporary headquarters at Apel's Opera House at Oakland and North Main Streets; that building still stands. Ela's former partner, Pratt, printed the paper for him in Rockville.

The Herald moved back into the rebuilt Rose Building but moved out again in 1891 into a two-story

building on Hilliard Street that became the paper's home for the next 37 years.

Fire struck again, this time on Nov. 18, 1922, and the Hilliard Street home of *The Herald* was gutted.

Not a single edition was missed.

The Hartford Courant printed it for a week and the now defunct South Manchester News for the next two weeks, while the operation was being set up in the Herald's news office on Oak Street. Three weeks later, it was back in its rebuilt Hilliard Street plant.

K of C Home Bought

In 1928, the home of the Knights of Columbus on Bissell Street became available and it was purchased by The Herald.

Improvements were made in the plant over the years, but when it became evident that The Herald was outgrowing its home, an addition was erected in 1967 north and east of the plant, and it contained a modern newsroom, pressroom and circulation department. The paper at that time converted from letter press to offset press publication, but continued hot metal production.

Then in 1972, another new building was erected north of the pressroom, and fronting on Brainard Place. At that time, the paper completed conversion to full offset production by the photo-composition method and automation.

Ela, in 1889, hired a 19-year-old immigrant from Northern Ireland named Thomas Ferguson, who had been a mill hand in nearby Talcottville and that town's correspondent for the paper. He reported to work the first day wearing his Sunday best clothes and soon found himself washing ink off the rollers. The next day he officially became the "printer's devil," and began a career that took him to the top --- owner and publisher of The Herald.

He worked in the job shop, became foreman of that shop, then make-up man, reporter, city editor, and publisher.

The Herald went daily in 1914, and Mr. Ferguson started a column he called, "The Observer's Column."

When Ela died in 1924 and Ferguson became managing editor, his son, Ronald, succeeded him as city editor. Ronald Ferguson's journalistic career took him to New York City and Providence RI, before returning to Manchester; he had been a contributor to the paper during high school and college days.

Gains Control

Thomas Ferguson gained controlling interest in the paper in 1928 when he purchased stock owned by E. Hugh Crosby, one-time advertising manager and treasurer. Complete financial control passed to Thomas Ferguson in 1945 when he acquired stock owned by C. Denison Talcott, president of the company and son-in-law of the founder, Ela.

The paper continued to grow under the watchful eye of the Fergusons, and they contracted for a new Goss press that was installed in 1951.

But neither got to see their paper printed on that press. Death came two weeks apart for the father-son team. On August 29, 1951, Thomas Ferguson died; Ronald on September 12, 1951. The new press was in final stages of installation, and rolled later that fall.

Paper Sold

Almost a half century of Ferguson family ownership came to an end November 8, 1971, when the Ferguson brothers sold The Herald to Hagadone Newspapers, Inc., a division of Scripps League Newspapers, Inc.

With the sale came a change in the corporate title, from The Herald Printing Co., to Manchester Publishing Co.

As a result of a corporate reorganization, Scripps League Newspapers, Inc. took control of Manchester Publishing Co. from Hagadone in late 1978.

During Scripps League's ownership, the Herald was further modernized with the introduction of a computerized editorial system. The Herald was voted New England's Newspaper of the Year by the New England Newspaper Association in 1990.



Fire at the Herald's Hilliard St. building, November 18, 1922. *Photo by John Knoll.* [Webmaster's note February 2016: Fixed up, the building became the home of Able Coil. It is still there, on the south side of Hilliard St. near the intersection with Main St.]



Knights of Columbus building on Bissell Street, before The Herald bought the building in 1928. *Photo by John Knoll.*



Circa 1965 photo of The Herald building on Bissell Street, looking east toward Spruce Street.



Circa 1980 photo of The Herald building on Brainard Place, looking west toward Main Street.

Second article, "Herald Was First Issued in 1881," *The Hartford Courant*, Sunday, September 30, 1923, page 74. Note that 1923 was the 100th anniversary of Manchester's incorporation, and an occasion to look at its history and accomplishments.

"HERALD" WAS FIRST ISSUED IN 1881

Manchester Newspaper Has Had Progressive Life Since Then



Manchester's first newspaper was the Manchester "Weekly Times," published by a man named Kingsbury, along about 1847. Its life was brief and it was not until 1881 that a newspaper that lived was first published. That was the Manchester "Herald."

Elwood S. Ela, publisher of the "Herald," got his first taste of newspaper work on the earlier publication. When a boy, he had the pleasure of seeing his first effort of handwriting in print. It was the account of a camping experience in East Hampton. For forty-two years Editor Ela has led an active newspaper life, always living the progressive pace which newspaper service demands.

The first issue of the Manchester "Herald" came from the press on December 15, 1881 and despite two very damaging fires that wiped out the plant where the "Herald" has been published it has never missed an issue.

The paper started under partnership owners – Mr. Ela and Thomas S. Pratt of Rockville being those financially concerned. Mr. Ela did the reportorial and editorial work in town and the paper was printed in Rockville. After four years Mr. Ela bought out Mr. Pratt's interest, which was then fairly large, since they had assembled a mechanical department. The forms were made up in Manchester and then sent to Hartford to be put through the presses. This was inconvenient and uneconomical and Mr. Ela secured a press and various other necessary equipment and a plant was set up in the Rose block. Fire cleaned out this plant, but another was temporarily organized and when the present Rose block was erected a new plant was set up. There it remained until thirty years ago when the substantial plant on Hilliard street was built.

As the town grew the "Herald" kept apace. It was the first semi-weekly newspaper established in Connecticut and was a four-page paper, representing practically a cut in two of the eight-page weekly. It was only a short time until the semi-weekly became an eight-page paper. The example set by the "Herald" as a semi-weekly was adopted by other papers throughout the state, most of which continued as such and a few have marched on like the "Herald" and have become dailies, and only a few have changed back to the weekly, or passed out.

The "Herald" entered the daily field October 1, 1914 and now has a declared circulation of 3,944. The fire in 1922, totally destroying the plant on Hilliard street, while handicapping publication for the time, did not prevent issues appearing regularly. The plant of "The Courant" was put at the "Herald's" disposal. The present plant equipment of the "Herald" is among the finest to be found in any city or town of the same population in the country.

In 1914, when the daily was established, a corporation was formed, Thomas Ferguson and E. H. Crosby being admitted to ownership in recognition of their long years of faithful service. Mr. Ferguson has been with the "Herald" for thirty-three years and Mr. Crosby almost equally as long. Mr. Ela is president and treasurer; Mr. Ferguson secretary and plant superintendent; Mr. Crosby, advertising manager.

1928 version of the masthead of *The Herald*.

