

THE DUMFRIES REFORMER

"Public Opinion is the Great Pillar that Upholds the Commonwealth"

Notice of future publication of the *Dumfries Reformer* was given by Mr. James Ainslieⁱ on November 10, 1849 in a document titled "A Prospectus of the *Dumfries Reformer*, a weekly newspaper to be published in Galt on the first week in 1850." The document was signed by "James Ainslie, printer and publisher, etc., Main street, Galt."ⁱⁱⁱ The Prospectus outlined the political views of the *Dumfries Reformer*, and of Mr. Ainslie, which were clearly stated as those of the Reform political party.

James Ainslie, in partnership with Peter Jaffray,ⁱⁱⁱ had taken over Waterloo County's first weekly, the *Dumfries Courier*, in July 1846^{iv} from Mr. 'Ben' Hearle, who had founded it in 1844.^v The *Courier* was renamed *The Galt Reporter* immediately. The Ainslie-Jaffray partnership came to an end when Mr. Ainslie left to found the *Reformer* in 1849. The two newspapers, the *Reporter* and the *Reformer*, supported opposing political parties throughout the years, from January 2, 1850 when the first issue of the *Reformer* appeared, until August 1, 1912, when it joined with the *Reporter* to become Galt's only newspaper. *The Galt Reporter* was the champion of the Conservative Party, whereas the *Dumfries Reformer* expounded the views of the Reform and Liberal Parties.

James Ainslie's career as printer and publisher of the *Dumfries Reformer and Western Counties Mercantile and Agricultural Advertiser*, ended on August 10, 1853 when the newspaper was sold to James Young, who was but eighteen years old at the time.^{vi} The printer of the newly acquired publication was John Allan. James Young became associated with the Reform Party and was to represent Waterloo South as a Member of Parliament from 1867 to 1878.^{vii} The *Reformer* flourished under the guidance of the energetic James Young, becoming a twice-weekly newspaper for a short time, published on Wednesday and Saturdays, as of September 9, 1854. By September 1855 the newspaper had reverted to a weekly publication.

August 5, 1863 marked the publication of the final issue of the *Reformer* under the ownership of James Young. The new owners, William M. Topping^{viii} and John Allan, assumed proprietorship of the newspaper the next day, on August 6, 1863. This joint ownership of the *Reformer* continued until January 1865 when John Allan became the sole publisher and proprietor of the newspaper. The newspaper was known at this time as the *Dumfries Reformer and Western Counties Agricultural and Commercial Advertiser*; four years later, on September 1, 1869 the name was changed to *The Dumfries Reformer, and Waterloo County Commercial and General Advertiser*. Three years later, on October 1, 1872, Mr. Allan regretfully sold the *Reformer*. In an editorial, "Valedictory," in the October 2, 1872 issue of the *Reformer*, John Allan explained to his readers that he had been compelled to sell the newspaper because of "failing eyesight." He explained that his eyesight had never been strong, and that the doctors had advised him to cease straining his eyes before it was "too late." The new owner and publisher of

the *Reformer* was Samuel Hutchinson, who most recently had been chief parliamentary reporter for the *Toronto Globe*.

Samuel Hutchinson was proprietor and publisher of the *Reformer* for only a short time. The Anderson Brothers appeared as editors and proprietors of the newspaper for the first time as of the January 7, 1874 issue. Before the year was up, there was to be yet another change in the ownership of the newspaper. The Anderson Brothers announced in the December 23, 1874 issue of the *Reformer* that effective, January 1, 1875, James Gordon Mowat and Company would take over proprietorship of the newspaper. James G. Mowat was well known, not only as the editor and proprietor of the *Reformer*, but as a weather prophet for the *Toronto Globe*, and as an author of many humorous sketches under the pseudonym of "Moses Oates."^{ix} He is reported also to have published almanacs.^x

The acknowledgment of the new ownership of the *Reformer* on the mast head of the publication began as Mowat & Co., Publishers, to be changed in December 1876 to J.G. Mowat & Co., Editors and Publishers, and then changed again in February 1881 to the first designation of Mowat & Co., Publishers. Another change took place during Mr. Mowat's ownership in December 1879 when the name of the newspaper became just the *Dumfries Reformer*, the name no longer bearing the extension of *and Waterloo County Commercial and General Advertiser*.

Ownership of the *Reformer* by Mowat & Co. ceased as of Thursday, May 19, 1881 when James Young, who had been owner and publisher from 1853 to 1863, once again acquired ownership of the newspaper. In his editorial in the May 25, 1881 issue of the *Reformer*, James Young explained to his readers that the "office and paper are to be placed under the management of Mr. John Collie,^{xi} at present editor and proprietor of the *Paisley Advocate*, who was formerly connected with the *Reformer* office for several years... ." John Collie, Manager, appeared on the mast head of the newspaper for the first time on June 15, 1881.

Another change occurred a month later, on July 13, 1881, when readers were advised that the *Dumfries Reformer* was once again under new ownership. The new owners were John Collie and Thomas McGiverin, known as Collie & McGiverin, Publishers. Collie and McGiverin explained that James Young had purchased the *Reformer* during the month of May as a temporary measure until it "could be satisfactorily reorganized... ." Format of the paper was to be changed from eight pages to four large pages, and as of August 4, 1881, publication was to be on Thursdays, instead of on Wednesdays. The names of Collie & McGiverin remained on the mast head until August 28, 1890 when ownership was changed to that of T. McGiverin, Publisher. Another change to the appearance of the paper occurred with the January 1, 1885 issue when the type was changed from the old Gothic letters to a more modern style of lettering.

On September 1, 1892 Thomas McGiverin said his farewell to the patrons and readers of the *Reformer*. Mr. McGiverin announced in that day's newspaper that Andrew Laidlaw, "one of the partners in the late firm of Pattullo & Co., the publishers of that excellent paper, the *Woodstock Sentinel-Review*," had offered to purchase the *Dumfries Reformer*, and that his offer had been accepted. Mr. McGiverin explained further that Andrew Laidlaw had been connected with the *Sentinel-Review* "for over twelve years," that "he is thoroughly in touch with the Liberal party, and the *Reformer* will therefore remain the same staunch advocate of Liberal principles which it has been in the past." In his first editorial, in the September 8, 1892 issue of the

newspaper, Andrew Laidlaw promised his readers that politically "*The Reformer* will seek to be a reformer." He also promised that it would be Canadian because as Canadians, "we look neither across the Atlantic nor over the Niagara river for Canada's future."

Andrew Laidlaw was to remain proprietor of the *Dumfries Reformer* until August 1, 1912 when the newspaper amalgamated with the *Galt Daily Reporter*, under a slightly changed name - *The Galt Daily Reporter*. On that day, *The Reporter* which had been owned by Jaffray Bros., Limited, became the property of Galt Reporter Limited. The editorial in *The Reporter* on that first day of August in 1912 stated that the "amalgamation of *The Reporter* and the *Reformer* is purely a business arrangement, forced upon the stockholders of both companies by ever increasing managerial burdens, with no compensating returns from local advertisers." Put more bluntly, the editorial went on to state that "Economic considerations alone dictated the merger." *The Galt Daily Reporter* retained James D. Clarke as Managing Director, and J.P. Jaffray as Editor, both men continuing on in similar positions which they had held before the merger.

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Kitchener, Ontario, 2001.**

NOTES

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- ⁱ James Ainslie was born in the Parish of Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland, where he was christened on January 31, 1821. James, and his older brother, Adam Ainslie, were two of the nine children born to Alexander Ainslie and his wife, Margaret Weir. James Ainslie died at his home near Galt, in North Dumfries Township, on December 29, 1873, aged 52 years and 11 months.
- ⁱⁱ A microfilmed copy of this Prospectus is available in the Grace Schmidt Local History Room of the Kitchener Public Library. The Prospectus is at the beginning of the first film of copies of the *Dumfries Reformer*.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Breithaupt, W.H. *In Waterloo Historical Society Volume 9* (1921), p 154; and Sanders, Constance E. *In Waterloo Historical Society Volume 59* (1971), pgs. 52-55. (Peter Jaffray was born c.1800 in Stirling, Scotland, and died November 15, 1864 in Galt, in his 65th year.)
- ^{iv} *The Galt Reporter*, Editorial, July 31, 1912, page 2.
- ^v Sanders, Constance E. *In Waterloo Historical Society Volume 59* (1971), pgs. 51-52.
- ^{vi} James Young, who was born in Galt on May 24, 1835, was the son of John and Janet Young who had emigrated from Melrose, Scotland the previous year. John and Janet Young kept the Queen's Arms Hotel in Galt, for a time. (McNaughton, Carlton. *In Waterloo Historical Society Volume 6* (1918), pgs. 37-38.)
- ^{vii} Lamb, Kathryn Hansuld. *In Waterloo Historical Society Volume 81* (1993), pg. 148.
- ^{viii} William M. Topping was born in Fochabers, Banffshire, Scotland on October 23, 1835, emigrating to Canada in September, 1835, when almost eighteen years old. He died in Galt on June 18, 1898. (*The Galt Reporter*, June 23, 1898, pg. 3.)
- ^{ix} Brown, H.W. "The Kitchener and Waterloo Collegiate and Vocational School. *In Waterloo Historical Society Volume 15* (1927), pg. 271.
- ^x Stroh, Jacob. "Reminiscences of Berlin." *In Waterloo Historical Society Volume 18* (1930), pg. 186.
- ^{xi} An obituary in *The Galt Reporter* of June 11, 1890 informed readers that John Collie had died on June 4, 1890 at his residence in Seaforth, Ontario. Cause of death was consumption. According to the *Reporter*, Mr. Collie had been associated with the *Reformer* for a time during the ownership of J.G. Mowat, returning in May 1881 as manager, when James Young took over as owner.