

Gannett Bust

This life sized bronze bust was presented to Frank Gannett in 1940 "in appreciation of [his] outstanding qualities as man, citizen, and employer" by his co-workers who "inscribed in marble and bronze this permanent record of their high regard and affection." Gannett was born near Rochester and grew up in Bolivar. He first arrived in Ithaca as a freshman at Cornell, having won a competitive scholarship. While a full time student, he had five part time jobs in addition to his position as editor of the Cornell Sun and campus reporter for the Ithaca Journal. Before he submitted his first article for the Journal, he was given a list of names and businesses that were never to appear in the paper. If an event occurred in front of a store that did not advertise with the Journal, he was supposed to report that it had occurred across the street or next door to give publicity to advertisers. Gannett also wrote for the Ithaca News, the city's other publication, and eventually became its editor. During the typhoid epidemic which gave the city national recognition as "scourge-ridden Ithaca," Gannett warned residents about the danger of drinking the polluted city water. The private company which supplied the water and several other merchants who were losing business due to Ithaca's bad publicity sent Gannett the following message, "If you don't stop printing typhoid fever news, we will stop advertising in the News." He refused to stop reporting on the fever and lost their business. Gannett was appalled by the amount of control advertisers had over the newspapers he worked for and came to believe that in order for newspapers to be free from these sort of obligations, they must be financially solvent.

In 1906 Gannett embarked on his career as newspaper publisher when he and his partners bought a half interest in the Elmira Gazette. Collectively they had \$3,000 in savings and were \$17,000 in debt. The venture proved successful and, in 1912, Gannett bought the Ithaca Journal where he abolished the list of unmentionables. He also bought the Ithaca News which was merged with the Journal to become the Ithaca Journal-News before being renamed simply the Ithaca Journal. Gannett continued to buy newspapers in upstate New York making them less dependant on single advertisers while allowing them to remain editorially autonomous. Gannett believed that a newspaper should reflect the community that it serves. Because of this he did not censor the opinions of his editors, and his papers expressed a wide variety of political views.

After Gannett's death, in 1957, the company continued to grow. The Gannett Newsroup now includes 74 daily papers, 22 television stations, and employs 47,800 people. It is an international company with papers in the United Kingdom, Guam, Belgium, Germany, Italy and Hong Kong. USA Today, created and owned by Gannett Co., is the largest selling daily newspaper in the nation with a daily circulation of 2.3 million.

Sources:

www.Gannett.com/map/history.htm

Williamson, Samuel T. Frank Gannett. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1940.

DHS archives: S-169-A (14-21)