

61 YEARS A PRINTER AND
STILL AT THE "CASE," IS
RECORD OF PICTOU MAN.

Presence of Thomas McCarvill
Links Day of First Things With
Modern Age.

(By John D. MacDonald in the Halifax Herald)

Those who know the history of Pictou will recall that it was in 1827 - 102 years ago - that William Milne, a printer "frae Aberdeen," began publication of the "Colonial Patriot," Pictou's first newspaper. Since that day the old town has never been without a weekly paper and it is of more than passing interest to recall that it still numbers among its citizens a printer who has been continuously at work there, in one office or another, for considerably more than half that period; a craftsman who "learned the case" in the same office in which "The Patriot" was first printed; who remembers Howe; who "made up" the forms of the Colonial Standard when the late Hon. S. H. Holmes was its editor, and who still is, with exceptional punctuality, at his post of duty as an efficient foreman in the office of the Pictou Advocate. The man referred to is Thomas McCarvill, whose portrait appears on this page, showing him as he is today at 74 years of age.

Won Howe's Support

"The Colonial Patriot" was the medium through which Jotham Blanchard and Dr. Thomas McCulloch won the support of Joseph Howe in the fight of the people against secret and autocratic government at Halifax. The Patriot was printed "at the house of James Dawson, Water Street, Pictou." Mr. Dawson was the father of the late Sir J. William Dawson. The historian tells that he conducted a book and stationery business, his stocks of books being superior to any in Halifax.

At his place of business, with dwelling above, still stands intact (immediately east of E. S. Brown's store of today). Pictonians infer that it was at his publishing "house," his place of business, rather than at his dwelling that the Patriot was printed. At all events the Patriot's primitive printing plant was purchased by Mr. Dawson when the Patriot ceased publication in 1883 and was in that same building some 30 years later, when the business was owned by Murdoch McPherson (son of the retired Hudson Bay Company's factor who lived in Norway House). The years had brought additions to the early outfit but some of the type faces of 1827 were those with which Tom McCarvill became acquainted as he filled his first "stick" in the Dawson building, in 1869 in McPherson's job office, of which the late William Harris was in charge.

Link With Past

The foregoing facts are worthy of recital here as illustrating how Mr. McCarvill's presence links the day of first things in Pictou, in so far as the printing-house is concerned, with the modern age, wherein even the "country" office has the benefit, owing to electricity, of the many inventions which have revolutionized the work of the printer. He has seen the old man-killing hand press, with a capacity of a hundred or so sheets an hour, give way to a modern electrically driven cylinder press; he has welcomed the introduction of linotype machines, which produce in one hour as much "matter" as an expert compositor used to set by hand in a day; he has memories of the all-night labors of the printers before such inventions were known, when, after the papers had been printed, they had to be folded and addressed by hand, two operations which have also been simplified by machinery nowadays, when barring accidents, all-night sessions are unnecessary, save in the offices of the morning dailies. The printing-house changes he has known in his 60 years experience have

had their counterpart in every other department of life. Sixty years ago they had no telephones, no typewriters, no elevators, no electric lights, no phonographs, no automobiles, no fountain pens, no worthwhile railways, no motion pictures, no aeroplanes.

Made Change

The McPherson job office went out of business about two years after the young typo started there. He then cast his lot with the staff of the Colonial Standard, serving successively with Mr. Holmes, the late David Power and C. E. (now Senator) Tanner, until 1884, when he accepted the foremanship of the Pictou News Office, then conducted by the late Charles D. MacDonald. It was while Mr. McCarvill was with the News, in 1887, that the writer became his apprentice and "learned the case" under his direction; learned many of the mysteries of the art; and learned to appreciate his many good qualities of head and heart. Even then the old order prevailed. Type was set by hand, the press was hand-driven and papers were folded by hand. Friday nights were "all-night" sessions, from 7 p.m. till 6 a.m. Saturday. Over 40 years ago! Yet, he had then been a printer for almost 20 years. His hair was getting gray. He had not been without his share of trouble and bereavement.

Plant Destroyed

The Standard office was destroyed in the big fire in the autumn of 1890 and in the following year the then owner of the News, H. G. Pineo, discontinued publication of the paper and sold the plant to the company owning the Standard. Mr. McCarvill went with the plant to the Standard office, then managed by Mr. Dennis and there directed operations until December 1893, when the writer who had been conducting a job office on his own account for a year or two previously, decided to start publication of "The Pictou Advocate" and engaged

Mr. McCarvill as his foreman. For 36 years he has been making-up the forms for The Advocate. He set up its first press in the old three-story "Munro" building on South Market street, hand-driven cylinder machine of a type he had never seen until then. The next year more convenient quarters were procured on Water street, and all went well until January, 1900(?), when fire destroyed building and plant. In the new and larger building erected that year (now the Opera House) a power-driven plant was installed, including a modern Babcock press with folding machine attached, a Monoline typesetting machine, power driven job presses and "point system" type, which had by that time practically displaced the old "named" sizes. The new outfit came as a great boon to the then ageing foreman whose mechanical "bent" had kept him in touch with all the advances the craft had been making in the outside world.

Further Advance

There too he saw the Monoline give way to a Mergenthaler linotype machine and after the last removal of the plant to the present brick building on George street, a second linotype was installed. Throughout all the years since the Advocate was established Mr. McCarvill has been the "inside boss" of the shop, the dependable man, responsible for the efficiency of the plant in all its details and for the quality of its output. For 25 years he served the writer faithfully and most efficiently and it is indeed pleasing to be able to say that no unpleasant incident ever marred the harmony of that long relationship. He is the same manner of man under present day ownership of the office. His record for constancy of service has been a remarkable one. Prolonged holidays he never sought and illness seldom detains him from his duties. His journeys to and from the office are made with clocklike regularity. Better still, he has always been conscientious about his duties and upright and dependable in every respect. Congratulations are surely due to him from the community in which he lives, as

he now enters on his 61st year of continuous effort at his chosen calling.



THOMAS McCARVILL

Foreman of the composing room of the Pictou Advocate, who has been at the printing game for over sixty-one years.