

# 100 years: Community has grown but links to past remain

**'No publication can be sustained by money and writers merely; there must be readers.'**

— Edgar Bloomer  
Enterprise founder



**'We will seek to make this paper a permanent journal of progress, and trusting that the Enterprise will be appreciated by the people, and that our issue will grow in size, circulation, character and influence from this day forth, its initial number is herewith presented.'**

— Edgar Rollin Bloomer  
Nov. 2, 1888

**I**T STARTED as a modest, four-page paper published from a little printing shop on Grand River 100 years ago this year. Edgar Rollin Bloomer, founder and first editor of the Farmington Enterprise, predecessor to the Farmington Observer, might not recognize the communities he knew so well as Farmington Township and the Village of Farmington. The cornfields in the township and the hitching posts in the village have been replaced by gleaming office towers in Farmington Hills and a revitalized downtown in Farmington.

Still, he'd find threads of life that bond his time and ours.

We're now a community of 70,000 instead of 7,000.

But in many ways, we're still close-knit, much like the folks who called Farmington home a century ago. Community roots are still important for many.

The staff of the Observer today is dedicated to much the same ideals that Bloomer espoused in his first column.

"Appreciating readers must be found," he wrote. "No publication can be sustained by money and writers merely; there must be readers."

**BLOOMER WROTE** that it's as fair to judge the intelligence of any community by the character of the paper it supports. He wrote that the people of Farmington "have their character quite in their own hands as regards the Enterprise."

He then pointed out that it's neither possible nor desirable for any editor to be the sole news chronicler. "It is not possible, for no



**Bob Sklar**  
editor

one man can know everything; nor is it desirable, for a paper should reflect the view of a community, not of one man."

A century later, those same principles are still applicable.

Just as Bloomer, we know the meaning of community journalism and the value of local news. We appreciate the importance of seemingly minor events that carry a special meaning to a large segment of the community.

**THE ENTERPRISE'S** first issue featured news tidbits about everyday happenings:

- "Fred Warner's Store is chuck full now, water so cold he is selling them off at a lively rate."
- "Mrs. J.L. Hogle, who has been visiting friends in Detroit, returned home Saturday evening."
- "Anyone wishing extra copies of the Enterprise, to send to friends,

can find them at this office, at two cents per copy."

• "The Farmington Democratic Club, headed by the Redford Band, attended the great Democratic meeting at Pontiac yesterday."

• "The Ladies Aid Society will furnish meals in St. Grace building on election day."

**THIS REMAINS** your newspaper and news, to a large extent, remains what you think it is -- a city council tussle, a school board vote, a civic event, a community fair, a rezoning bid, a new business, a scholarship award, an engagement announcement, a shabby street corner, an interesting personality, local sports.

We don't shy from editorial comments, either. Taking a stance on a local issue in hopes of pricking community debate has been a vital part of our editorial philosophy since Edgar Rollin Bloomer's day.

As he wrote in the Enterprise's 10th anniversary edition in 1898: "We have labored for the success of our town, advocating what we believed to be for the best interest of the whole people, and we take great pride in the many improvements our town shows today."

The motto Bloomer selected for his newspapers would be just as applicable today: "Independent in All Things-With Justice to All."

## Publisher eyed better product

**P**HILIP POWER had no qualms about buying the Farmington Enterprise in June 1866 and merging it with the Farmington Observer, which he bought six months before.

It made sense, both from a business and a newspaper standpoint, even though both papers were thriving independently.

"It seemed to me the combination of the Enterprise and the Observer could serve the community even better by combining the entrepreneur approach and technology of the Observer group with the community roots and established position of the Enterprise," said Power, chairman of Livonia-based Suburban Communications Corp., which owns and operates the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

Power particularly liked the Enterprise's long history of spirited community involvement and the way it grew as Farmington itself grew from a farming hamlet to a booming suburb.

"Through the years, the Enterprise had built a record of serving the community well," said Power, a sixth-generation descendant of Arthur Power, a Quaker who came to Farmington in 1824 with his seven sons from Farmington, N.Y., in search of a better life.

In a sense, Power said, the Enterprise "linked its future to that of community."

**A NEWSPAPER,** Power said, must learn to use high technology to advantage if it's going to survive as a real community voice.

"I had an especially strong interest in doing that in Farmington because of my family connections in the community," he said. "It seemed to me in Farmington, if anywhere, that I was trying to create the best, most accurate, most responsible, most representative community newspaper."

Unlike daily newspapers or television stations, a community newspaper lives and dies with the community it serves. It therefore is a vital part of the community, Power said.

"It supports the community, it represents the community and if the newspaper is properly edited and managed, people in the community think of it as their newspaper," he said.

Daily newspapers and television stations tend to "cherry pick sensational or unusual stories from



**"Country and metropolitan newspapers are not competitors,"** said then-Enterprise publisher William Miller in 1928.

An individual community and really don't care much what happens other than the community serving as the receptacle for some odd or bizarre story, which then can be lifted to be of interest through the region," Power said.

In that light, he said, the standard mass media "are them, whereas community newspapers are us."

**POWER'S WORDS** echo those of an early predecessor, William Miller, Enterprise publisher from 1922 to 1927. In the 40th Anniversary Edition, Miller wrote: "Country and metropolitan newspapers are not competitors. Both are cogs in a great wheel, each performing a distinct mission in carrying out the natural order of things pertaining to human behavior."

By their nature, Power said, community newspapers care more about their community than the standard mass media do.

"Ceaselessly," he said, "we try to put in the Farmington Observer news and information that people in the community want and that they can't get anywhere else and is necessary for the regular leading of a good life."

Such news includes "knowing what the politicians are up to, what play is being presented at the high school, what the local restaurant is serving, seeing how your neighbor's kid is doing in track, finding out what's new and unusual downtown."

Power's hope into the 21st century is for the Observer "to continue to be the embodiment of the hopes and reality of the Farmington community."

## Paper marks special year

On Nov. 2, 1988, the Farmington Observer, whose predecessors were the Enterprise & Observer and the Enterprise, will mark its 100th year of newspapering in Farmington.

That's a milestone we'd like to honor through the pages of this keepsake section, which chronicles the newspaper's development from a county weekly into an award-winning suburban newspaper.

Providing invaluable assistance during our research were:

• The Farmington Community Library for allowing unlimited access to its Michigan History Room.

• Farmington resident Lee S. Peel, author of "Farmington: A Pictorial History," 1971.

Observer graphics editor David Frank designed the section.

— Bob Sklar, editor

Observer publisher Philip Power, at the Power family plot in Farmington's Quaker Cemetery on Gill Road. He's standing beside the grave of Arthur Power, who founded Farmington in 1832 and donated the Gill Road site for a cemetery and for the Friends Meeting Place. The first people buried there were Selinda and Phebe Minerva Power, Arthur's daughter-in-law and granddaughter, both victims of the cholera epidemic of 1832. Arthur, who died in 1836, also rests here along with his five sons and two daughters.



RANDY BORST/Star photographer

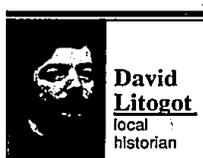
## Power clan: Farmington pioneers

**I**N 1866, Philip Power bought the Farmington Enterprise and merged it with the Farmington Observer. In this transaction, the Power family "came home" again. For Philip Power, an Am Arbor native, is the great-great-great grandson of Farmington founder, Arthur Power. In a recent interview, Philip Power, 80, said he is continuing Arthur's "startling will power and the energy to act on it."

"Arthur came from New York," Philip continued, "to break sod and begin a new community. That took courage."

Courage to break ground has been tradition in the Power family. Philip Power started out as a journalist and today runs the third largest newspaper chain in Michigan.

The Power family can trace its American heritage back to Nicolas Power, who lived in Massachusetts in the 1600s. Being related to religious rebel Roger Sherman, the family broke with tradition early. By the time Arthur was ready to move to Michigan five generations



**David Litogot**  
local historian

later, the Powers had already inhabited Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut and New York. Arthur would marry three times, have 13 children and establish the first Quaker settlement in Michigan.

**NATHAN POWER**, one of Arthur's sons, continued to "break sod." He was Farmington's first school teacher, an active abolitionist, one of the 16 founders of the Republican Party in 1854, a Michigan legislator and a diary writer. This diary, begun in 1837, shed light on life and happenings in old Farmington.

Nathan, as well as some of his

brothers and sisters, was also involved in the Underground Railroad effort. A nephew even fought in the Civil War and later became an actor and treasurer for Oakland County.

Nathan Power's grandson, Nathan Hamlin, or N.H. Power, was Farmington's historian in the 1920s and '30s, writing dozens of articles for the Enterprise.

This is the man that Robert Power admires the most. Robert, 73, lives in Marshall, Mich., and is the present-day historian of the Power family.

A retired Detroit and state health worker, he says that N.H. Power, "walked him along Farmington's creeks almost 70 years ago," his earliest recollection of the community. He has many original family papers, the deed to the Quaker Cemetery, and the original Power (Nathan's) diary.

**ROBERT'S COUSIN** (and Philip's father) is 85-year-old Eugene Power of Am Arbor. Although he retired in 1970, he is still actively involved

with his business and plays water polo every chance he gets. He is best remembered for founding University Microfilms in Ann Arbor. His technical skills in photocopying important British manuscripts in British archives during World War II earned him knighthood in 1977.

He, however, did not want to talk too much about himself. Instead, he focused on his grandfather, also named Eugene.

Grandfather Eugene went to Cuba at the turn of the century to raise lumber and cattle. When it didn't quite work out, the alkaline water fouled up the steam engine at the sawmill and some of the hardwood logs sank, he moved to Elk Rapids, Mich., and was employed in iron works. He was a farmer on the side and his son, Glenn, planted one of the first cherry orchards in the state.

A newspaper publisher, a historian, a corporate leader. These present-day Powers are continuing in the Power family tradition of courage, skill, innovation and history.